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VOL. I.

[SECOND EDITION.]

London:
CHARLES J. SKEET,
10, KING WILLIAM STREET, CHARING CROSS.

1877.

251. e. 318.

MARRIED AT LAST.

CHAPTER I.

THREE o'clock—a dismal day in February—the snow striving hard to force itself to the surface of the drooping clouds.

In a square box of a room, minus a fireplace, sits a young lady in a cloth jacket. The only articles of furniture, besides the chair she occupies, are a piano and music-stool.

There is a hum of changing classes below, the tinkle of a silence bell, and the high-pitched voice of the excitable, overworked little professor, giving out a sentence of his dictation—

"*Sans doute d'autres conquérants ont hésité dans leur carrière de gloire.*"

The door of the Music-room is opened, and a voice announces—

"A letter for you, Penny."

I am Penny, and raise my eyes as the missive alights on my lap.

It is rather an event for me to receive a letter, my only correspondents being school-fellows, who have escaped bondage and revel in the delights of home.

My epistles number about six in the year, and I can calculate to a day when they will come.

The letter tossed in lay on my knee, face downwards, its deep-black edge and imposing crest upwards. I turn it over and study the superscription—

"Miss Penelope Sutherland Gedise,
"Mrs. Sourlander,
"The Ragett,
"Banff,
"Scotland."

And for the present I must be content to

know I am addressed according to my baptismal name by a person whose handwriting is strange to me. Before I can break the seal my pupil enters. I labour through the lessons, I strive to put brilliancy, pathos into a cake-loving, sodden-witted girl, with frost-bitten fingers, and I shudder as the chilblained members come down like hammers on the wrong notes.

Fainter becomes the light, fainter, fainter, and the odious smell of petroleum ascends through the dirty, rotten boards, informing me that lamps are lighted somewhere. I light mine, and place it in what might seem dangerous proximity to my pupil's frizzled locks. But 'familiarity breeds contempt,' and I am aware of no risk.

Five, strikes the clock.

"You may go, Miss M'Combe, your time is up."

With openly evinced delight, she rises, gathers her music, and departs.

I may go also.

Where? Only to the oppressive class-room, or my dormitory, to endure darkness, as well as starvation. I am almost dead to the exact degree of cold, from habit; I only dread a change of condition, a migration into a warm apartment. The work of returning circulation is painful after six hours passed in a room without a fire. Such is my lot each day; in the evening I have my blood thawed, my face fired.

I have closed the piano, ere I remember my unopened letter. Leisurely I draw it from my pocket; I am unexcited, because I am hopeless.

Bending towards the sickly lamp, I read. The handwriting is upright, stiff, the composition formal. As I decipher, my heart beats quicker, and my breath comes in sobs. I am astonished at so much feeling, considering my life of repression. Shall I confess it?—rather ashamed of the weakness. I have

got to regard emotion of any kind as a disgrace to womanhood.

I hush myself now, as I checked my cries, gulped down my tears when a child, and sit awhile to consider. I find I am in possession of some relations, and the offer of a home. A staggering bequest, a sudden transition from destitution to exuberance. I read on. The writer makes no profession of affection; it is with her, as with me, a matter of business, therefore I comprehend.

Had she waxed eloquent, opened her arms, taken me to her bosom, figuratively, I should have suspected foul play, and recoiled from what I was unaccustomed to.

I rise, the epistle crushed in my throbbing palm, and go to the window.

I am young, and youth is generous enough to forget much at the prospect of a change—ay, and to forgive. I see nothing but a dim outline of houses and a scanty illumination. But there is life there; other brains, other

hands are at work, and I am no longer caged. The chance of escape has come, and I am ready to avail myself of it. What should I fear? why should I dread disappointment? I expect nothing. Nothing but an exchange of benefits. Food, a bed to lie on, shelter, and twenty pounds a year. I, in return, direct Eunice's studies. It did not appear to me that the arrangement was elaborate enough to admit of much shuffling. I craved for no affection, friendship, or society. All I asked was a new bondage, liberty to serve in a fresh place. I would go; if it did not satisfy me I could seek further. I should, at least, be spared the pangs of parting; I should leave no one beloved behind me.

There is something mightily refreshing in the feeling of independence, born of the knowledge that you belong to no one, that you are not responsible for any one, and none is responsible for you. Ties, links in connexion with the heart, must be painful, and apt to entangle.

I am a pauper, an orphan.

There is no door in the kingdom at which I have a right to knock, and say, "Admit me."

Yet I stand with palpitating heart, rejoicing in my freedom, and wondering what can have induced me to remain so long with Mrs. Sourlander. I have spent seventeen years in Banff.

A flash of recollection lights my memory, and I remember my advent in Scotland, a tiny child of three.

I had pretty embroidered frocks, and blue ribboned hats then. Alas! they had no successors. The change in my wardrobe depicted to my childish understanding, better than anything else could have done, the alteration in my social condition.

With the scanty plum-coloured merino, and cheap pink delaine, I beheld a shadowy outline of the future.

Every one was kind to me, but their kisses were not of the kind to beget love; there

was no attempt made to bind my affection to any person or thing.

The uncertainty of enjoyment or possession in this world was illustrated by the disappearance of my one doll, upon which occasion Mrs. Sourlander advised me never to allow anything to become necessary to me; that to possess a treasure was a sin in the sight of God, and that atonement must be made by prayer and fasting.

The pangs of regret were too keen to allow of my benefiting by her discourse, and I retired from her presence with only one point fixed in my mind, that the good God was a jealous God.

I was being trained to an approved model, for a future of self-denial and industry, and my spirits, damped by the scholastic vapour, contracted and died.

The painful regularity of my life caused irregularities in my disposition. There were particles of a combustible nature in my composition that could not be eradicated. And

though amusing enough to my companions, were the innocent causation of much whining hypocritical lecturing on the part of my preceptors.

My feet were turned out paddle-fashion, my shoulders drawn down, and my chin in. My finger was cruelly stabbed, learning the mysteries of underclothes-making, my chin rubbed by the stiff linsey dresses, whose only recommendation was their undeniable durability.

I travelled the beaten path of knowledge with dogged weariness. I dropped scalding tears on the scored pages in darkness, but for the sparks Mrs. Sourlander emitted from her brilliant eyes. I could not gain that lady's favour; I was sullen, uninteresting, and hopelessly plain.

At some period of my young life my only surviving parent died, and Mrs. Sourlander put me into rusty mourning. I recollect the change in my apparel only.

The loss of my father placed me exclusively

in the charge of a guardian, who discharged his duty with awful frigidness.

They were prudent people, they were not going to have the sin of misrepresentation upon their consciences. They brought me up forlornly in accordance with my position. I had learnt, slept, eaten, and drunk without any special motive, except the one desire—alive in the breast of every created thing—to live. Had I been asked "for what," I could have given no reply. I had no object. My life had been too mechanical to allow of any interest.

I knew I was an orphan and "odd-looking," and I had a dim notion that I should go on teaching and shivering in Banff till some wind, colder than the rest, blew me into my place in the bleak churchyard.

So estranged had my life been, so void of all confidence, that I could place no reliance in the existence of my "aunt," as the writer of the letter called herself, till it was authenticated by my guardian.

Hastily extinguishing the lamp, I rushed from the room, and excitement blinding me, I precipitated myself into the arms of the French professor. A torrent of anything but anger, and a sense of restraint about the waist, recalled me, and I beheld a pair of dancing eyes.

"You have seen your lover, Miss Gedise?"

"No, monsieur," retorted I, indignantly, extricating myself, and retreating to a safe distance.

"La, la, but you need not be in such a hurry; he is not here to see, that happy man. You have a lover, *mon enfant?*"

"No, monsieur."

"Eh?" cocking his bald head on one side, like an intelligent bird, "then you like old boys?"

"Sometimes."

"Is that all? When I was your age, young and innocent— You were about to remark something?"

I silently apostrophised my face for having betrayed me, but resolved not to seek shelter beneath a lie.

"I was only thinking, monsieur, that must be a long time ago."

He chuckled, and rubbed his fat hands, the veins starting on the shining forehead.

"Good, good; you had me there; your tongue is ready. Well, it is some time since, but—"

"Monsieur," interrupted I, retreating before the advancing and grimacing old frizzen, "excuse me, I must go to tea."

"Tea! The beverage you can see your own shadow in, and always so hot it might have been brewed in ——," making a horrible face. "Do not, I pray you, drink too much. *Adieu, enfant*, and take my blessing with you."

Bowing almost to the flags, he tripped away, and I, with redder cheeks and brighter eyes, sped onwards to the dining-room.

Being music-governess ought to have

rendered me exempt from many disagreeable petty duties.

But it did not. Mrs. Sourlander paid me £16 a year, and made me do the work of another governess in over-hours.

I carved at dinner, superintended the cutting of the thick bread for breakfast and tea, and then presided at a table. I enforced order during study hours. I rang the servants up in the morning.

I had to see to the neatness of every drawer and press in the house, the counting and mending of all the clothes and linen, and darn Mrs. Sourlander's hose.

My table was full when I entered, and the vapour ascending from the tea-urns. I served it, and noticed an oily substance floating on the surface of each cup.

It was my tealess night.

The urns had been cleaned outside and *in* with brickdust and oil.

We had our fast days at the Ragett as

regularly as any religious denomination, and I observed them strictly.

For instance, when haggis was the dish, or the soup prepared from maggoty peas, which always had the manners to boil out, and rise to the top, curled in the agonies of death.

Mrs. Sourlander's mother, Mrs. Coner, managed the housekeeping, and paid more attention to her daughter's profit than our appetites, or the quality of the fare.

The thick slices of bread disappeared, leaving all unsatisfied, and the scalding water, flavoured with a pinch of tea, a tablespoonful of carbonate of soda, and sweetened with treacle, drove the blood into every cheek.

Conversation was carried on in a subdued tone, smiles—tame enough, God knows—lighted sickly countenances stealthily. The warmth acted as a restorative, and something like contentment crept into tired faces.

We were half starved and depressed, our

lives rendered a burthen to us. Five days out of every seven the food was bad and of the cheapest kind. When it was eatable there was not enough provided.

I can declare truthfully that not once within my recollection was my hunger satisfied.

And yet we stayed!

Because few had the prospect of a better home, few allowed to complain, or believed when they did it.

Like myself, they had no more sympathetic ear turned to them than that of a step-mother, an austere uncle, or an indifferent guardian, who thought more of your proficiency in the multiplication table than the state of your constitution.

This night I rejected the scrap of bread with which I generally took off the edge of my appetite, and my nerves thrilled strangely, wildly, as the frozen hail battered against the window.

Something, it must have been joy, over-

ruled my habitual reserve, and I let the little ones hang round me as we left the dining-room.

How human nature in its feeblest form recoils against slavery, how the prospect of a change stimulates Hope! Chained to the mill from my babyhood, I had become too callous to care, or contrast my life with that of others. So wedded to my lot that the possibility of release had not suggested itself to me. Now that Fate had knocked off the fetters, my blood bounded through my veins, and my courage rose with the storm.

What a fool, what a coward I had been, to remain so long with Mrs. Sourlander! She had no claim upon me. My future was my own to glorify or blight. Why need I stay to consider what the world would think of me? All I had from it was a share of its labour. While the depressed creatures learnt their tasks, I considered and arranged my next step, and I began to think Mrs. Sourlander was correct

when she declared "selfishness" to be my besetting sin.

I certainly was taking thought for none other than myself, and contemplating in a quiver of joy the hour when I should separate myself for ever from those who had fed and sheltered me from my youth upwards.

So much for my gratitude!

There was something fierce and strong within me, something that had not depended upon the miserable fare of Mrs. Sourlander's "inclusive" terms for its sustenance.

Study over, I approached Mrs. Sourlander in considerably less fear than formerly, and requested permission to visit my guardian, Mr. Wilson.

She stopped short in her noiseless sweep from the room, and eyed me with curbed hate.

"To-night, Penelope?"

"Yes, madam."

"You know, I suppose, that it is inclement without?"

"I do."

"Then go."

By this time the eyebrows had strided across the contracted forehead, and claimed fellowship with the coarse black hair.

People said Mrs. Sourlander was handsome, that she had a perfectly Grecian face. I believe she had, and I know it was a cruel one. Not one atom of mercy or forgiveness had she in her composition, or one spark of womanly love. She ruled by unceasing severity, the bond between her and her subordinates was fear, and no affinity had her soul with anything in human shape.

Enveloped in a waterproof, and sheltered in some degree from the driving sleet by a cotton umbrella, I sallied forth, getting over my boot-tops in water at every second step.

The channel was turned into a river, down which the water rushed headlong into the lower part of the town, washing the pavement in its course.

The lighted lamps bore testimony to the previous passage of some one, otherwise it might have been taken for a deserted colony.

Every one was safely housed but me, who trotted down the incline without meeting a creature till the door of the Bank ejected an immense man, in a long coat and sou'-wester. Only by a dexterous movement, that almost twisted my ankle off, did I avoid being precipitated into the gutter.

"I hope I did not hurt you, my child, but whoever *can* you belong to, to let you out a night like this?"

"Nobody," replied I, tilting the umbrella on one side to see my interlocutor.

"Why, it's Penny," exclaimed he; and his astonishment making him forget the storm, and lift his face from behind his collar, I recognised Tom Andrew, in whose arms I had gone spinning round at every juvenile party in Banff.

Since I had been considered "grown up,"

we had danced a little more independently. By that I mean that my feet had been allowed a place of their own on the floor.

"Come nearer; you will be washed away. Have you quarrelled with Mrs. Sourlander, and run off?"

"No, I almost like her, now I am going away. A dread of punishment makes me desirous of parting in charity."

"Away!—where to?"

"Surrey ultimately, and Mr. Wilson's now."

He pulled my hand through his arm, captured the wayward umbrella, and marched me off.

"To Surrey! And Banff will lose its best player and dancer. No more taking you home through the snow, Penny, and talking in whispers on Mother Sourlander's doorstep, eh?"

"No, those days are past. I shall never again drum my finger-ends off on somebody's wooden piano, and then go shivering home in

the morning air in a washed white muslin. Thank Heaven!"

"You are glad to go?"

"Sincerely; and so would you be if you were me. Excepting when I waltzed with you, I have never been out of harness since the hour I set foot in this hard, stingy land, a child of three. There is a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but none to prevent the life and spirit being ground out of a human being, if another has the power and inclination to do it."

He drew up under the next lamp, and I saw pity in his eyes.

"Penny, why did you not complain?"

"Because no one inclined their ear to me; because no one thought it worth their while to enquire whether the orphan was *happy*. They saw me clothed and alive, and there their duty ended. I cannot thank any one for bringing me up; I have been *dragged* up slowly and painfully, laying the dust for my

feet with my tears. Nature never intended me to be the stunted thing I am ; insufficient food has accomplished that. Had I been properly fed and mercifully treated, I had had a more comely appearance and a more generous disposition to-night."

"How do you know you will better your circumstances by going to Surrey ?"

"I don't know, and don't care. I shall just keep moving on. I have one advantage strangers will be little prepared for; I shall always be on the defensive. I will never again allow any one the chance to set their heel upon me. But do not keep me standing here ; my feet are soaking already."

Not till the door of my guardian's house was opened did he leave me, and then with the promise to see him before I left Scotland.

Mr. Wilson is a maltster, fresh, fair and fat, a good husband and indulgent father to a wide circle. I found him sitting before a hot fire, sipping crusty port, having dined

generously, and feeling on agreeable terms with himself and all the world. Mrs. Wilson was upstairs with a new baby.

"Why, God bless me, Penelope, what are you doing out to-night?" demanded he, keeping at a safe distance.

He hesitated before inviting me to be seated, fearing, doubtless, that my damp garments might deepen the tone of the crimson morocco.

This wealthy publican, well fed and warmed himself, was strangely blind to the condition of others, save when by contact (as now) they threatened to blemish his belongings.

"I prefer standing, thank you, sir," replied I, mercifully cutting short his pangs, and edging nearer the fire.

In those days my estimation of happiness was to be able to sit by a fire, with permission to heap wood on *ad libitum*. I warmed myself at an imaginary fire many a time. Absurd this may seem to those who have had

their wants abundantly supplied, and it is only one who has experienced denial that knows the force of desire. God was good when He bestowed imagination upon suffering humanity. It lessens the distance to reality; but it is invariably the companion of sorrow—not misery, that can be expressed by "cold" or "hunger," but a nameless sorrow that belongs to some lives, and by its intensity stifles the wail ere it can reach the ears of others.

My dress was drying, and emitting a disagreeable odour, while I explained my errand. When I produced the letter, he eagerly took it from me and perused it.

"Umph!" ejaculated he, folding and handing it to me.

"Commanding sort of person she appears to be. She is your aunt, Penelope, your mother's brother's widow, and I must say I think she might have noticed you before. Her husband was connected with the staff many years, and Governor of one of Her Majesty's

possessions. Your aunt is a lady of some importance; she is the daughter of Sir John Wrigglie. I think that is all you need know; indeed, it is all I am in a position to tell you. I daresay she has that number of children. However, that and all else you will be able to verify for yourself when you get there. Change is good for young people, and I hope to see a great alteration in you when next we meet. You go soon?"

"As soon as Mrs. Sourlander can get some one to fill my place."

CHAPTER II.

THREE minutes more, and I was again battling with the wind and rain on my way to the Ragett. I surprised Mrs. Sourlander enjoying her supper of roast chicken, browned potatoes, and bottled stout. The poorly paid teachers had bread, and a few wedges of cheese, like soap, served to them in the class-room. Still, Madame Sourlander thought she did unto others as she would have others do unto her, and people *called* her a just Christian woman.

When I stated my intention of leaving, her dark face flushed as only dark faces can, a purply red, and the eyes inclined slightly

inwards, as is sometimes the case with people of terrific passion. I knew from outward symptoms, early learnt, the condition of Mrs. Sourlander's feelings at any time.

"And so, Penelope"—drawing in her chin and assuming the melodramatic tone she gave her elocution lessons in—"and so you are leaving me?"

"Yes, madam."

"Have you no sense of gratitude?"

"Yes, when benefits are received for which no payment is requested or exacted."

"Have I ever asked you for a return?"

"No, because you have always taken it. You have got more work out of me than you ever will out of any one else. Your next governess will be as exact in her measurement of service as you are in yours of remuneration."

"Silence, ungrateful girl! How dare you so address me? Go; I desire to retain you no longer. *Go*; you are no loss."

"Then why this displeasure? If I do not lacerate your heart or stretch your pocket by leaving, why do you not part from me indifferently?"

She bit her lips in anger, and strove to call some befitting show of emotion into her hard countenance.

"Because, because, having reared you from a child, I feel, I feel—"

"The hypocrite I know you to be, and something like terror arrests the numerous falsehoods you are about to utter, hoping to continue the deception. You need act no more to me; those behind the scenes don't think so much of the performances as those in the dress circle. I have no objection to your enchanting an audience, but spare me the rehearsal. I know that the child misfortune threw across your path years ago never found her way into your heart, and the best return I can make, for the great benefits you insinuate you have conferred upon me, is to tell

you that the sting of poverty and desolation sharpens every faculty, and bestows upon the oppressed an unerring instinct, which enables them to distinguish enemies from friends. May you be more fortunate with your next orphan. Good night."

After the impertinent speech just recorded, it is almost unnecessary to say I left the day but one following.

"Of course not; what lady could submit to such behaviour?" remarks some one.

True, but a *lady* would not have merited it. Mrs. Sourlander was only a woman, a grasping, covetous woman, with crooked principles and the hardest heart. The short while I was beneath Mrs. Sourlander's roof, after our dissolution of service, that person walked with a true spirit of resignation, and mutely made it understood that "she had cast me off very reluctantly, but in Christian sorrow, fearing I was not one of the 'elect.'" Had I been stopping over "Sabbath," I have not

the least doubt that I should have found myself the subject of public exhortation, and some portion of the day would have been set aside to consider my need, and wrestle with Satan for me.

I have a sad recollection of one delinquency that was carried to the "Kirk" for dissection by the pastor.

When I was about ten years old, a little Scotch girl came to receive a share of Mrs. Sourlander's tenderness, and participate in the extraordinary benefits to be obtained at the "Ragett."

Maggie Cowie was a nervous, sensitive child, with pink cheeks and startled blue eyes, in which the tears were nearly always swimming. She came very timidly amongst us. Mrs. Sourlander received her from the willing hands of a step-mother, and quartered her upon me. I was chaperon to the juniors then, and as I advanced in years my vocation adhered to me. Maggie was eight;

she was to share my hard bed, and I was to be responsible for her in general, in particular when she did not know her lessons, poor little stupid child!

My sullen nature found in Maggie something too feeble to disagree with; her amiableness disarmed me, and, as is sometimes the case with opposite dispositions, we became attached.

My affection never took a visible form; I neither said nor did anything descriptive. But when we were shut up for the long nights in the cold top room, with the rain drops pattering through the skylight upon the bare boards beneath, I let her ease her swollen heart with stories of "mamma," and creep near to me for warmth. I had never known my own mother, or any such gentle creature as Maggie described—with loving exactness—her mother to have been, and I did not know what to reply when her child would whisper to me between her sobs,

"Penny, do you think mamma knows I am so cold?" When Miss Taggart rapped the red knuckles with her ruler because the frightened child gave James's accession to the throne a year before he was born, I felt the seeds of hate sown in my heart.

One day an alarming discovery was made. Some trumpery coins on a string, belonging to one of the girls, had disappeared. We were, of course, all drawn up in a quaking line, glared at, and interrogated severely, and something in Maggie's manner, possibly her terror, caused her to be pointed at as the thief. The child was conjured to "confess," mildly at first, but with increased wrath when she persisted in her innocence. Finally, she was expelled from the schoolroom, and shut up in the box-room, an apartment next to the cistern, where no sound from the house reached her, no light, nothing to vary the monotony but the running water to which her tears formed a constant accompaniment.

I was her jailor. I carried up the meagre supply of food at meal times, and conducted her to bed at nights, into which she got in silence. This lasted some days, while I did my best to share her captivity by being extra naughty, unsuccessfully, to my regret, and when the minister came to examine us he was told of the lamb that had gone astray. Let us hope they meant well; but oh, it was a grievous mistake to make that child's supposed sin the text of his Sunday sermon. We were all squeezed together in anything but a joyful state in the cushionless pew, our legs dangling, aching and cold, from the hard bench, Maggie, pale and weak, beside me, when the minister's text made every pulse bound—

"Thou shalt not steal."

Then I placed my hand in Maggie's, and we sat sick and wretched while he gave us, not, as commanded, the hope of Heaven, but a vision of the bottomless pit, wherein sinners sink.

"Brethren, my duty to-day is a painful one. I must strive to bring home a sin, the sin of theft, to a stubborn heart, but, let us hope, my brethren, not a stony one. Let us all unite in earnest intercourse that this darkened understanding may receive the all-purifying light. Let us rise, like true soldiers of the cross, and beat back the devil, who is carrying off one from our ranks, not to peace, no, *no*, but to everlasting misery, to the tortures of fire and brimstone, to—Hell!"

I heard no more. The water that ought to have come out at my eyes tried to force a passage through my ears, and deafen me. The great sides of my beaver bonnet served as blinkers, and prevented me seeing Maggie, but I could feel her trembling violently.

How terrible, how awful must such an ordeal have been to her sensitive nature. To the most hardened creature it would have been a shock—no marvel to her it was a fatal one. She walked home unsteadily, and seemed

half stupid all day. When we were in bed she complained of a pain in her chest and head. I did what I could. I offered the only comfort I possessed—my perfect belief in her innocence—and then I subjoined entirely on my own responsibility, but according to an inspiration I received—

"Never mind, Maggie, your mamma knows you did not take the nasty trash."

"Oh, yes, I never thought of that, Penny; mamma knows, so I don't care."

The faint voice, so full of newly found gladness, was soon hushed in sleep, her arms round my neck, her cheek to mine.

When I awoke, my night-dress front was wet. I called, "Maggie, Maggie!" She did not answer, and she felt so cold. My cries roused the sleepers, all but one—she is sleeping now. She had burst a blood-vessel. Rest, Maggie, rest!"

* * * * *

My adieus were easily and rapidly said, and

I found myself at the station with my one box, and just sufficient money to carry me to Ringly Royal.

My packing only occupied me twenty minutes, so no wonder the receptacle for my wardrobe was small.

I had only three dresses, a black cloth, a drab merino, and a black and white check silk, all made as soberly as a nun's, and adorned alone with a white tucker at the throat. It was useless regretting the scantiness of my apparel; I had no means to procure more, and it never occurred to me that I should be required to do anything but keep out of people's sight.

On my way to the booking office I was arrested by a friendly hand.

"Take it quietly, Penny, or you will have worn the soles off your shoes before you reach your aunt's. And there is no necessity for you to go to the booking-office, your ticket has come to you."

He held the square bit of pasteboard out to me.

"How kind of you, Mr. Andrew, to save me speaking through a pigeon-hole. But," gasped I, taking a nearer view, "it is *first* class!"

"Well, have you any objection to travel in a first-class carriage?"

"Yes, the best of objections. I cannot pay for my seat in it. You must, please, change it!"

"I shall, please, do nothing of the sort, and you will go first class because I shall send you."

My cheeks reddened.

"Tom Andrew, be it known unto you that I am no different from any other fool in being as proud as I am poor, and that the sense of obligation to me is painful."

"Indeed! I regret to see you take a benefit so ill. But be it known unto you, in turn, Miss Penny Gedise, that it is a man's delight

to confer a kindness upon a woman, and I am not superior to any other in liking especially to give this advantage to *you*."

"This is news. I know as little of 'men' as 'benefits,' but I suppose the same feeling prompts you now as when a small child you singled me out—the shabbiest of all—to dance with—pity. I wonder whether any one will ever do anything for me from a more encouraging motive. It is somewhat dispiriting to always have everything 'dropped' to you?"

He seemed rather to enjoy my annoyance.

"You are wrong. No man loves a woman who is his equal in stature, pocket, or ability. The necessity to stoop enhances the value of the object that directs the action. To charm a man, claim his protection; he will surely love the one best who clings to him."

"Love! what have we to do with that? Give me the ticket that has prompted such a dissertation, and let me get in, or I shall be left,

and then I don't fancy your self-complacency will soothe me."

He helped me in, closed the door, and then put his head through the window.

"You think I am gratified with myself?"

"Undoubtedly; or rather, at your ability to act the liberal. You have my permission to insert your benevolence in the 'Town Crier.' It will give quite a flourish of trumpets to my departure from the Banff stage."

"Penny, you spitfire, you don't understand; men are—"

"Arrogant donkeys. There—good-bye."

The train started.

I began to think I had been rude, and I did not wince.

"Penelope Gedise's ingratitude" was a Banff proverb. I was too proud to own to myself that I had been unnecessarily abrupt to Tom Andrew, but I settled to send him a cigar-case, or some other manish requirement, when I could afford it. I was philo-

sophical by nature, and circumstances fostered that inclination. I heartlessly proceeded to make myself as comfortable as possible, and dismissed the past from my mind. I curled myself up in one corner of the carriage and folded my shawl over my knees. I spent the night in the train, and, all being well, arrived at "Ringly Royal" the following afternoon. I did not know whether Tom Andrew had placed me in charge of the guard; I certainly had not bespoken his protection. I could not imagine any evil befalling me that did not happen to the whole train. Nervous people are generally self-important. My companions were three gentlemen, whom I chatted to and amused quite unintentionally. My hat slipped back and gradually off, where it lay unheeded behind me. I must have looked a little fright, and I daresay it was my odd appearance more than my notions that made them laugh. In return for my impudence they gave me sandwiches and wine, made a pillow for me with

some rugs, and had the foot warmer changed whenever it was practicable. It was charmingly novel to sit there, comfortable and amused, and go dashing through the darkness at express speed, scattering the sparks on either side of us. The night seemed short, for one always kept awake to bear me company. I could not sleep. We parted, like most fellow travellers, never to meet again, and for the sake of other girls who are doomed to wander, minus a protector, I hope there are many such gentlemen. It was chilly and dim when I alighted from a second-class carriage at "Barnston" station, and inquired how far it was to "Ringly Royal."

"A good three mile, marm, by the road," responded the porter, shouldering my box, "but there's a fly here, if you like it."

Weary and cold, I agreed to hire the fly, and soon found myself nearing the abode of the only relative who had ever taken the trouble to own me. My sensations were odd.

I grasped my alpaca umbrella so firmly I might have been expecting a battle instead of an embrace. The hedges and trees were bursting into spring beauty, and the fragrant scent of some early blackthorn greeted me as I pushed my head through the window.

"Ringly Royal" was an old-fashioned Manor House, set some way back from the road. The big gate had no keeper save an immense holly, whose leaves half hid the latch. There was no lodge, no modern cottages, nothing but the cold red house, with its rows of stiff windows, and to the left a tiny old church which had stood there, like the house, longer than any one could remember.

We stopped before the door. There was no sign of expectancy; I don't suppose I was of anything like so much consequence as a load of coals. When the door opened, slowly and pompously, I was found on the top step, my box beside me, and my eyes widely opened with eagerness. The fly was dragging itself away.

I asked for Mrs Sutherland.

"Certainly, marm; this way, if you please."

The hall was spacious, like the vestibule. Two steps divided it from the hall, the carpet of which formed an agreeable contrast to the cold tiles of the vestibule.

The slippered man-servant opened the door of a room to the right, and revealed to my sight the comfortable picture of three ladies at afternoon tea.

The light was uncertain, but I easily distinguished my aunt by the heavy folds of black that lay around her, and the startling whiteness of the widow's cap.

Very likely they had forgotten me; for no one came forward, and I stood a second hesitatingly on the threshold.

"What an odd little creature!" exclaimed a soprano voice from the depths of an arm-chair, and the owner of it, condescending to rise, continued—

"Mamma, it must be the Scotch girl."

"Dear me," replied "mamma," "you are sadly too rapid, Isabel, If you are Penelope Gedise, advance and let me see you."

I did so, and was received by a double gold eye-glass supported by my aunt's jewelled hand. I saw a languid smile grace the haughty features for a moment, then the glass dropped.

"Almost a dwarf," breathed the lady. "Pray take a seat near the fire. These are my eldest daughters, Charlotte and Isabel. Eunice, my youngest—by the way, where is Eunice?"

"Romping in the woods with Yorke," responded Miss Charlotte.

"Ah, there will be an end to such conduct now you are here, I expect"—inclining her head to me. "Eunice is high-spirited, and being the baby at the time of my irreparable loss, she has been greatly indulged. Charlotte, give Penelope some tea, my love."

That young lady rose, and I was enabled to

see that, like her sister, Isabel, she was tall and elegant, with the same cast of countenance, and abundance of golden hair. They resembled their mother in figure, features, and manner, but not in complexion. Mrs. Sutherland had darker hair, and rather a sallow skin. From the mother, the daughters inherited the magnificent style and carriage which formed their chief attraction, and I quite concur in the general opinion that they were remarkably fine women.

I had ample opportunity to notice my aunt and cousins, while drinking my tea. Having asked me a few questions relative to my past life, which I answered as briefly as politeness allowed, they commenced to converse over my head, an easy, flippant dialogue of toilets, parties, lords and ladies, enabling me to glean a tolerable notion of the indolent, indulgent life they passed, and how opposite mine had ever been, and was to be.

A relationship did exist, but they intended

to ignore the tie excepting when it might better suit their convenience. My cup empty, Mrs. Sutherland said,—

"Ring, Isabel; I daresay Penelope would like to go to her room. We shall meet at dinner. Eunice will be in directly, I hope. She has been dining with us when alone, but I may make other arrangements now you are come."

I curtseyed, and followed the maid. My room was a comfortable one, of moderate size, situated at the side of the house nearest to the church. I found it replete with elegancies to which I was totally unaccustomed; and very well pleased with the change, I proceeded to dress for dinner.

Past experience telling me I should be unnoticed, left me free from self-consciousness, and I explored my way to the drawing-room in a most indifferent frame of mind. My plain dress was all I could desire, for I saw I was not expected to dress—Isabel and

Charlotte would do that. I found the drawing-room, to my delight, empty of all save a flood of light from candles and fire. I wandered round like an unhappy spirit, refusing all the offers made by tempting chairs and down-pillowed couches; and totally forgetful of all, but my intense satisfaction with the various masterpieces of art and beauty scattered round. I was thinking of lying on my back on the floor, the better to appreciate the painted ceiling, the "Judgment of Paris," when a "ahem!" caused me to turn.

The person to whom the sound belonged was a gentleman of medium height, well proportioned, and of winning appearance. The deep blue eyes gleamed with mischief and intelligence, and the light silky moustache lay upon the cheeks in the most approved curve. There was a simplicity of dress and manner, an air of independence and good humour that made one long to laugh with

him. I wondered who it could be—not one of the family, certainly. He was not hampered by any ideas of his own superiority; the features had plenty of beauty, but no pomposity. The head of wavy hair was owned by a man of quick perception and generous impulse, but no autocrat. My survey was more interesting to myself than polite to him. My face must have expressed satisfaction, for he held out his hand, saying—

"You like me?"

"Yes, very much, but I have not the ghost of an idea who you are. I am Penelope Gedise, but possibly you know me better as the 'Scotch girl' if you come here often."

"I come here very often; indeed, I am always here, and I am familiar with both your names. You don't think the last one polite, do you?"

"It may be; I am not accustomed to refined society. I have never been treated deferentially. I am of too little consequence to com-

mand respect, too insignificant in appearance to inspire it; so it is left to people to give what they choose."

"And what do you say?"

"Nothing—I only think."

"I thought so. Now, if you'll sit down, Cousin Penelope—yes, I am Yorke—I'll tell you something. If you begin to *think* in this house, you will never be done. You are but a small person, and not lovely. You think fate ill-treated you, no doubt, and that you ought to have been beautiful. Turn your head slightly, so; yes, the face is pinched and pale, you are thin to ugliness, you have no redeeming point. I don't admire you, but some one in this house does, and that is Mrs. Sutherland. She is pleased with you because you are not qualified to enter the lists with the angels, Isabel and Charlotte. She will ask you to sit by dear Charlotte, so that purple-nosed Sir Harry may observe the contrast between poor shriveled little you

and the blooming Charlotte. Acquiesce, and the following day you will receive a pair of gloves. Your ugliness will make your fortune here; you will remain—Mesdames Leroux and Maret did not. Ah! ah!"

When his laughter subsided, I inquired—

"Who are Mesdames Leroux and Maret?"

"Two rather pretty girls who had the misfortune to come as keepers to Eunice. One made love to me, and my mother almost went out of her mind. I won't swear that she did not pack mademoiselle's box with her own hands."

"I don't think your mother will ever be called upon to perform that office for me; at any rate, not from the same cause."

He laughed.

"Of course not. We are to be friends, not lovers. Moreover, cousins' marriages are generally unlucky or solitary. And however much I loved my wife, I don't think I should care to be stuck up in a house alone with her.

You don't understand, I suppose; shall I be more explicit?"

"No! you are no oracle, your meaning is apparent. If your brothers and sisters are like you, you must be an interesting family."

"I regret there is little similarity, but I will do my utmost to amuse you. You can look at them, and listen to me."

I thought him the most impudent of men, and might have said it, had not something in white and blue cast itself into my arms.

"Gently, Eunice, you will strangle the tiny dame. Eunice is very gushing, Miss Gedise; she is almost a savage, and at present totally mannerless, her sisters say. Her affections are divided between old Jowler, the collie, and apple-pudding. Her expressions, upon paper assume the form of blots. Her knowledge of the French language extends no farther than high heels and powder, and her—"

"Yorke, hold your tongue! Eunice, I am

shocked. What an expression. It is indeed time you were under some discipline."

The speaker was Mrs. Sutherland, freezingly handsome, in a costly robe of silk and crape, intermixed with jet.

"You perceive," continued she, turning to me, "the lawless state of your pupil, Penelope, and how much constant guidance will be needed to render her in any degree like her charming sisters. I can only attribute the deterioration to the lax example set her by the foreigners I was absurd enough to engage for her benefit. I believe the present rage for French and German governesses will ere long decrease. There is reason to be thankful that we discovered the error before it was irredeemable."

Aunt seated herself, and I ventured to glance at Yorke and my pupil. The young lady I had innocently undertaken to control was standing in the most unconcerned attitude on the rug, attired in white spotted

muslin, caught up here and there by delicate blue ribbons. Her hair, light and curly, was plaited in one long pig-tail, secured at the tip by a ribbon, and hanging far below her waist. Though only ten years of age, her height was equal to that of a girl of fifteen, and her petticoats being remarkably short, she displayed an immense quantity of white stockinged leg, the prettiest of bronze slippers, and the highest of heels, giving her somewhat the appearance of a stork. It needed no consideration on my part to arrive at the conviction that my head would reach to my pupil's elbow; no higher. Slightly dismayed, I proceeded to examine her face. It was round, plump, and mischievous, with the most provokingly impudent little nose and chin. The mouth was large, and full of the prettiest teeth, which she exhibited in a grin. There was nothing of determination in the countenance, but an immensity of drollery. Therefore I hoped for little vice, and judged that

whatever was to gain her attention must be presented in an agreeable form. While I was gazing at her, she lifted her eyes and saw me. They twinkled wickedly for an instant; then drawing her face into the oddest attempt at solemnity, she returned my look steadily, and—winked.

The suddenness and uniqueness of the attack threw me off my guard completely, and I laughed. Two strides and she was beside me.

"I like you—I do, I do. If you don't lecture me, we shall get along nicely. If you do, I'll gum the inside of your best bonnet, and fill your boots with water."

Yorke laughed loudly, and Mrs. Sutherland exclaimed, "Eunice!"

"All right, mammy, darling; I'm only talking to Penny.—You like dogs, don't you? I do awfully! I am going ratting with Yorke to-morrow, and Jowler of course; he would cry if I left him at home. You shall come too, but you must tie your petticoats round

your ankles, or you may meet the fate of Swizlebob—I mean Mademoiselle Maret—"

"Eunice, am I to speak again?" majestically interposed her mother.

"Certainly not, mamma, for you distract me terribly. What was I saying? Oh, Mademoiselle Maret. You should just have seen her leaping round the rick-yard. Ask Yorke about it; he—"

"Yorke," pleaded the vanquished mother in despair, "stop her."

Almost suffocated with laughter, he interposed, and seating the wayward child upon his knee, whispered something into her ear, eliciting from her the reply—

"Of course, Yorke, for *you*."

In another second she had shot out of the room, and Mrs. Sutherland, flushed and disturbed, told me what she supposed to be a profound secret.

"I cannot manage that child; I hardly know what is to be done."

"Nothing. Leave her to Miss Gedise.

Eunice is a thoroughly good girl, Mrs. Sutherland."

"Ah, I might have known what to expect from you. You always take her part, and I am inclined to think you are to blame, Yorke, in spoiling her so much. She will never achieve a desirable marriage, I fear."

Her son smiled.

"Have no anxiety on that score, mother." Then he subjoined more lowly, "How some fellow will love her some day!"

He saw I heard him, and asked—

"You agree with me, and experience no dread as to the guardianship of our elf?"

"Not the slightest, if I may be allowed to go to work my own way."

"There, you hear that, mother. If you take my advice, you will dismiss Eunice from your mind, and leave Miss Gedise mistress of the situation."

The entrance of Charlotte and Isabel, like two swans, drafted the conversation into

another channel, and Mrs. Sutherland gazed with pride and satisfaction upon her lovely daughters. They were all one could desire to look at, but so utterly selfish as to place companionship quite out of reach. They expected homage, and if not accorded, the omission was resented by a manner exclusively their own.

Yorke treated them, like his mother, with that studied courtesy which bespeaks the total absence of sympathy. The dinner was stiff and heavy. Those I have mentioned constituted the party. There was another son at "Ringly Royal"—the second one, Albert—but being married, he lived in the neighbourhood, and overlooked the estate. The eldest, William, was a banker, residing at Farnham. Jack was abroad. Yorke, the youngest boy, remained at the homestead, in idleness. He was clever, and a qualified lawyer, but not practising, for some astonishing reason. To this child Mrs. Sutherland alone bent. His

opinion was respected; his advice sought; and for him her solicitude was at times feverishly displayed. She ruled all save bright Yorke; he might govern her, did he choose, and he was too noble to take the advantage. He laid his obedience at her feet, as a subject might his life at that of his king. Her daughters were her pride; this son, her visible god.

Eunice's place at table being by Yorke, there was little cessation to her chatter, and I could see that her intelligence was reflected from him. Naturally, she was sharp, but had he behaved to her with the cool indifference he did to her sisters, the result might have been similar. They sat as beautifully inanimate as two marble goddesses. Their bosoms, white as milk, heaved almost imperceptibly, their eyes rested with equal stupidity upon every one, and but for an occasional insipid smile or a faint response, one might have feared their pulses moved as slowly as their brains.

Mrs. Sutherland eyed the board, and those gathered round it, complacently. The table blazed with silver and wafery glass, the rarest flowers drooped beneath the lamp-light, and brighter glances shot from Yorke's blue eyes as Eunice's witty little impertinences, or irresistible laughter claimed his attention.

There was nothing to cavil at; each sustained with credit the part allotted to them, and if a look of too great confidence in her possessions beamed from the haughty mother's eyes, it can easily be understood that so complete a "present" annihilated a thought for the "future."

Having been trained to duty, it was no hardship to take this yoke upon me. Eunice's studies were by no means profound, and the morning was deemed sufficient for their pursuance.

Mrs. Sutherland, though fully aware that her youngest child would never equal her eldest daughters in grace or beauty, had no

mind that her neck should be stooped by a too diligent search after knowledge, any more than theirs had been. A difference of opinion I did not hazard, and it was arranged that I was to teach what I could, also cast a watchful eye over the wilful darling. There was no schoolroom; it was thought ridiculous to devote an apartment exclusively to Eunice's use, and it ended in our taking up our abode in the housekeeper's room. This room ran down the half of the hall, and was entered upon by a door at the far end. It had two other doors, one connected with the servants' offices, and another with the courtyard. I liked this room better than any other, and felt oddly at home in one of the old chintz-covered arm-chairs, watching the sun as it travelled across the moss-grown stones of the court. The place was barren, the oak table matched the cupboards and presses round the room, and the only attempt at luxury was a rug by the hearth, and an old sofa to match

the chairs. Once upon a time this room had been sacred to one Dame Applegarth, who had performed the duties of housekeeper for many, many years. Her death had occurred some months before my advent, and aunt had not appointed a successor.

Small though I am, I cannot have looked amiss in the departed old lady's chair, for Yorke came, sat upon the table, called me a little "Quaker," and nodded approvingly. One afternoon, when I had been in possession some weeks, and Eunice had gone riding with Albert, aunt came in, and being accommodated with a chair, asked me whether I would combine the duties of housekeeper with those of governess. I hesitated, but she amiably explained the nature of such duties, and I found them trifling.

I was to keep the keys of the cupboards and presses, situated in that room, supply cook with anything out of them she might require, and above all, take care they never

became empty. Not seeing any cause to decline the post, I expressed my willingness to try, and soon the light danced upon the basket of keys on my table, as well as upon Molly's row of milk-pails outside.

Daily I had opportunities of noticing that Yorke's prediction was verified. Aunt did like me, she believed in me, and trusted me with what she most valued—handsome Yorke. She treated me kindly, related to me any little matter happening to engage her attention; in short, appointed me to a position of confidence.

Not being very sociable, I frequently absented myself from dinner, and had an old-maid's tea by the open window instead. I found, however, that aunt liked me to appear, and I many times gave up my inclination, to accede to her desire.

My music was an acquisition—I say this without conceit. The goddesses had no more music in them than a couple of images, and

of this Yorke had made their adoring mother aware.

If I was required to please others, the opportunity of pleasing myself was not denied me. Aunt presented an excellent piano to the housekeeper's room, and I was free to devote all my leisure to it, if I felt disposed. I could not but appreciate her kindness. My life was agreeable and industrious; it suited me, and I began to entertain a greater regard for mankind. I was not over-worked, snubbed, or stamped into the swamp of poverty and wretchedness as formerly. I was permitted to raise my head, to feel I had a place in the world, and in answer to this treatment my nature softened. The sorrows and cares of others became more my own, the gentleness of a "greater life" crept into my heart, and I sympathised.

By degrees the once deserted housekeeper's room assumed a prominent place in the estimation of all; it had numerous visitors, and

had many an important argument within its sombre walls. If an accident happened, or an ailment came to any one, it was carried to the housekeeper's room, and one of the oaken presses invited to display its healing powers. Even Charlotte and Isabel, who were always running neck and neck with fashion, sometimes waxed eloquent over the charms of a blue bonnet, while I filled the sugar bowls.

Laura, Albert's wife, came and left sturdy Master Basil to spend the afternoon with me, going herself to pay calls, or fritter her time away at some fashionable gathering. This little man was not quite four years of age, a passionate child, with an olive complexion and flashing eyes. His mother had a dash of dark blood in her veins, and a paramount fondness for dress. Her boy she liked when trim and docile, but at the first whimper she banished him to the nursery.

I had never expressed any great partiality for little people, and I felt somewhat discon-

tented when the spoiled beauty bustled in, dressed in pink for a series of "calls" with her mamma-in-law, leading the little nigger by the hand.

"Here, Penny, you'll take care of Basil, won't you? He is so tiresome, but I don't suppose you'll mind."

"Really, Laura," exclaimed aunt, who had followed, "I don't think I can allow Penny to be so imposed upon. Where is your nurse, my dear?"

"At home. But the fact is, mamma, he is quite too much for Rose; he is such a turk, he plucks handfuls of hair out of the poor girl's head, and she declares she won't stand it. Only the other night we were aroused by a fearful cry, and when Albert rushed in, there was Rose sitting up in bed crying. Basil had bitten her."

In much horror, his grandmother eyed him through her glass.

"Don't you think you had better get Quin

to draw his teeth, Laura?" gravely asked Yorke. "It might be some check upon his cannibalistic propensities, which are developing very early."

"Yorke, you silly creature!" retorted the mother. "If I did, Albert would draw mine. He won't even send him to *school*. Is it not absurd?"

"Very," replied her brother-in-law, making a quisical face.

Aunt sighed. The case was an unusual one, and she did not know what to advise. Her handsome countenance wore a look of perplexity.

Meanwhile the atom of mortality who caused this consternation had seated himself on the rug, and was contentedly unraveling my yarn in the most determined manner.

His mother noticed his employment, and, uttering a scream like a startled bird, she pounced upon him with a couple of extended fingers and administered a prod on the side of his head.

Her son answered with a howl of rage, and clenching his tiny fist, he aimed a direct blow at her.

Aunt was shocked. Yorke laughed. His mamma ejaculated, "Now, you see."

I could hardly keep my countenance, but I recollected my loveless days of childhood, when every one seemed an enemy, and necessity made me sharpen every claw.

"If you will leave him, Mrs. Albert, I will try and do what I can with him."

"You are very kind, Penny," said aunt, "but he appears so violent, I hardly like—

"Be easy, my good lady, I'll see he does not eat her," promised Yorke.

The carriage rolled away, and I commenced the process of taming by taking off his hat and kissing him. He gazed at me with wondering eyes, and then clambered on to my knee. The brown hands were hot, the breath slightly laboured; there was a struggle going on in the small body. I began to think I should like to keep him, and folded my arms closely

round him. Presently he looked gravely into my face, and asked—

"Is Basil *always* a naughty boy?"

"No," replied I decidedly; "who told you so?"

"Mamma and Rose."

I almost said, "They know nothing about it," but checking myself, I gave him a slice of seed loaf instead, and held my tongue.

I saw his mind was full of something he was powerless to utter, so, resolving to replenish his mental larder, I related, very simply, the story of the "three white mice."

He was delighted; he hugged himself in extreme joy; the sullen look fled. He kissed me again and again, and the curly head pillowed itself trustfully on my shoulder. A few moments more and he was sweetly asleep. Then I laid him on Dame Applegarth's sofa, and returning to my work, learnt, for the first time, that the breathing of a sleeping child is musical.

"Well," said Yorke, appearing at the court-yard door, which stood open, "where is the young savage? Have you had a battle and are you the only survivor?"

I pointed silently to the sofa, and Yorke drew near.

"Sleeping as quietly as a lamb! Bravo, Penny! I shall advertise you as the celebrated child-tamer. But I don't believe it's all his fault, poor little darling! Mrs. Laura is a pretty woman, but I fancy she loves her bonnet as well as her baby. He has a bad temper, don't you think so?"

"Yes, and with it great intelligence. He likes to have something to think about, and no one will take the trouble to give him anything, so he gets cross."

"Ah, I understand what you mean. His mother's affection for him is not sufficient to practise self-denial. She thinks him a trouble and shows it. How little capacity some women have for loving, how their regard

cleaves unto themselves and their finery. They can rarely make a sacrifice, and await the issue with uncomplaining patience. If one does, society immediately pounces upon her, declares her a saint, surrounds her with a halo, and all the while she has only been doing her duty, regardless of *self*. Unselfishness is so scanty a virtue that people have got into the way of glorifying it when it does appear. If I married a calculating madam I should leave her."

"Then you imply that women are mercenary?"

"Decidedly. They nearly always have an eye to the future, and all their arrangements are made conditionally. That is what makes matrimony a lottery, so few men can put up with it when they find it out. There is real love and sham, like electro and silver, and the first drop of acid takes the colour out of both."

"Your defence is novel and your generosity limited. Surely, since woman is the inferior, her faults may be forgiven her?"

"Yes, but every pardon asked and granted reduces equality and confidence. I am glad you allow that your sex err; it is a fault ladies are reluctant to own. Am I correct in saying you have more male than female friends?"

"Quite. Men are generally merciful, women never so—at least, those I have had to deal with—and finding them so far from being what they pretend, disgusts me. I can feel and think more readily with men; they do not worry me with the petty forms of society, and they are quicker to believe and pity. Women puzzle me. They show such a desire to crush anything rising that may chance to shade themselves, yet they are selected to befriend the needy and succour the weak. I suppose I fell amongst thieves, but the only Samaritans I found were men. Such being my experience, I know that whatever trouble or sorrow befalls me, their help alone will I seek."

"And if it be withheld?"

"I shall feel sure the fault is my own, and ask no more."

"You are quite right; that heart of yours beats too bravely ever to find its echo in a woman's. A female friend I doubt you possessing. If you should, may I see her? because I believe she would be something more to me."

"What," laughed I, "would you marry her?"

He bent his flushed face nearer. "Penny, could I but find a woman to love me as I could love, I would *die* for her."

He turned and walked out. The child slept and I darned, while the words rang in my ears and branded my memory.

The dial of life turned submissive to other wills and wants, and I forgot the engraving made that afternoon. But there came a day when it stopped, and the index bore the characters—

"Could I but find a woman to love me as I could love, I would *die* for her."

CHAPTER III.

THE glory of a summer in Surrey is too widely known to need any remark from me. I appreciated it after my fashion—little visible delight, but an all-absorbing sense of joy that found no expression save in the bounds of my heart.

With the first warm days I made myself mistress of every nook and corner in the old place. The churchyard held the bones of Sutherlands for generations, and I could see one unappropriated plot of ground for the use of those yet within the mansion's weather-beaten walls. When that was full some of the mossy ground, sweet with wild hyacinths

and bluebells, must be gathered to "God's Acre," and the grand trees felled one by one. To have such a home seemed to me the climax of happiness, and I wandered about through woods and gardens early and late, gaining health for mind and body.

Things went well, Eunice improved, and I feel proud to own that my only hold upon the giddy girl was her affection for me. I began by having patience with her faults, and ere long she esteemed me for possessing and exercising what she had no command of. To vex me she was powerless, and to pain me she was unwishful.

July had been so beautiful that I hardly expected the succeeding month to equal it, certainly not to surpass it. But the opening days poured such a wealth of sun and blue sky upon the already thirsting earth, I saw I had prophesied incorrectly. I almost lived in the garden, choosing during the heat the "Wilderness," whose division from the

lawn was a swiftly laughing little river spanned by a rickety bridge, suggesting solitude and shade beyond.

The name "Wilderness" had been bequeathed to it by the children, who had played alternately "Robinson Crusoe" and the "Hermit" in its depths.

A wilderness it was as far as grass, weeds, and brambles went, but its forest of trees produced the most delicious fruits and nuts of every description, pronouncing its tangled condition to be owing to a whim of somebody's.

Rustic seats offered opportunity for reflection and repose, and here Yorke spent many hours in what his mother was pleased to call unsociability.

This place was of vast extent, and explorers ran some danger of becoming bewildered if they entered it for the first time guideless. My introduction to it was performed by Eunice, who proved a most reliable pioneer.

Not the least picturesque feature in this wood was an old cock-pit, no doubt an object of great interest in the days of bygone Sutherlands, but now nearly obscured by overhanging trees. Its depth rendered it somewhat dangerous, and for that reason strangers were warned of its vicinity.

When the boys were young, they had kept rabbits in it, and some of the pretty white creatures still dwelt there in a state of freedom, scouring the wood at pleasure. One of my favourite amusements was to creep beneath the boughs, and clinging to one, look over the edge into the well of varied green and watch the gambols of its tenants.

Here aunt and her daughters seldom came, the wood had no power to seduce them from the velvety lawn with its heart-shaped beds of many-hued flowers. It was a lazy time, and the housekeeper's room echoed with frequent appeals for cider, iced lemonade, and beer. Big Jowler took refuge from the sun

beneath the sofa, and mutely invited me to draw him refreshing draughts of water from the well.

The church clock had struck the quarter after twelve, Eunice had put away her books and fled into the garden, followed by the dog. I lingered to write an order, and ere it was concluded aunt entered, fanning herself, and majestically took a seat.

"You feel the heat very much, aunt?"

"I do indeed, Penny. This apartment has a delightful current of air, my dear. I am tempted to turn you out and instal myself."

"Do by all means, if you like it."

"The idea! Why, child, you make the room attractive. The longer you stop in a house, Penelope, the more people will wish to keep you. I hope I shall not have to mourn your loss."

"I hope not. I am totally beautiless, you see, and it would seem oddly hard if I were repulsive also."

She did not push the topic, but drawing a letter from her pocket opened it.

"Penelope," presently commenced the lady, "this letter is causing me some uneasiness. It is from a cousin of yours named Joan Berdan. But I had better explain the relationship. My sister, Eva, made an unfortunate match; she actually married a Yorkshire mill-owner, my love, a man she became acquainted with while staying at Harrogate."

"The Berdans were nobodies, and this man had worked his way up, and accumulated a tolerably good fortune. It was a great blow to us all, and we turned our backs upon Eva.

"Ten years since, Mr. Berdan died, and left my sister with one child, Joan, the writer of this letter. We have not seen each other for twenty years, and during that period only exchanged letters twice. You can easily understand my perplexity now, when I tell you that my niece, Joan, invites herself in this letter to come and visit me, and asks if

Thursday next will be agreeable. What shall I do, Penelope?"

"Say yes."

"But, my dear, consider the risk we run; I know nothing of the girl. She, most probably, has no manners and a strong northern accent. I hardly like exposing Isabel and Charlotte to her society, though I have reason to believe *their* manners and accent are too perfect to be open to corruption. There is, however, Eunice, and—and—Yorke."

I smiled. The idea of Yorke's pronunciation being adulterated was too amusing. He was the only one in the house entirely free from the usual Surreyisms which appear to squeeze their way into the greatest families, and never get ejected.

"I do not think you have anything to fear on the score of Yorke's accent; he—"

"Accent!" interposed his mother contemptuously, "I am not thinking of *that*. It is his heart I am anxious about."

"Heart?" echoed I, in amazement; "how can that be affected?"

"You are *very* obtuse, I must say, Penny. Do you mean to say, you have never heard of that wayward thing called 'love'? Supposing he falls in love with this girl?"

"My dear aunt, supposing he falls in love with the scullery-maid."

"Really, Penny, you are too absurd."

"How? One seems as possible as the other. If you have no more reliance upon Yorke's judgment than to suppose he will fall in love, regardless of circumstances, it's a pity you ever let him out of your sight. That he will fancy some one some day is certain, but surely, having been accustomed to refined society all his life, he will choose a lady. Miss Berdan is a lady, and rich, so if it does happen, I cannot see that it will be a calamity."

"Well, well, child, perhaps you are right. But she is no heiress, Penny. Some money

she probably has, but a few years previous to her father's death, a terrible fire took place in the mills, and the damage was enormous. They were almost ruined. I suppose she must come; you will be responsible for Eunice, and if you notice any partiality on Yorke's part, I expect you to tell me."

My face fired, and my tongue spake with its old asperity.

"Then you will be disappointed; I can get my living as a governess, and I will not turn informer. I shall not act the spy, let the consequences be what they may."

"Spy! What a disagreeable term you give it! I see you are perfectly ignorant of the usual method in such cases."

"You are right; I am unaccustomed to meddle in other people's affairs. My own, I find, require all my attention. My incapacity may be an inconvenience to you, but I hope there are others to whom it would be an acquisition."

"Undoubtedly. And now, my dear, forget the circumstance. You are apt to take things too earnestly, Penny."

"Because my life has been too busy to permit of much joking," I responded.

The appearance of the niece was a source of some amusement to Eunice and her sisters, and a variety of fancy pictures were drawn.

As the day approached, aunt's uneasiness visibly increased; she had "such a dread of country maidens, with red cheeks and arms." To me she did not confide any more fears of any kind. Her state of mind was known to her family, and her anxiety shared by Isabel and Charlotte, who blamed their mother for inviting her.

"Just as if it would be possible to present a fat Yorkshire girl to our set without subjecting ourselves and relations to ridicule. I certainly shall not accompany her anywhere."

And the queenly Isabel sailed out of the room.

"Say no more, my love, it cannot be helped now. Perhaps I have erred, but I will take care you are not annoyed with her. She must be kept out of sight, if she is a fright, and I will send her back as soon as possible."

This remark was addressed to Charlotte, who was about to follow her sister's example, and protest against the unhappy girl they had never beheld. Possibly it was vindictive; but I could not refrain from wishing she might be beautiful exceedingly, and crush Charlotte and Isabel into the dust.

Miss Berdan not being expected to arrive before five o'clock, Mrs. Sutherland, with her three daughters, drove to Dorking directly after luncheon. My leisure, as usual, I devoted to music, but hardly had I got thoroughly to work, when West appeared and informed me that "Miss Berdan" had arrived. Rather astonished, I jumped up and hastened into the library, but—I saw no Yorkshire girl.

A lady, rather short, possessing one of those well-formed elastic figures that prevent their being remembered as "little," was standing near the table.

The blue print dress cast a tinge of colour up to the pale face, whose chief charms lay in a pair of rich brown eyes well opened, bright and intelligent. The mouth and chin bespoke power of will and firmness of purpose in a striking degree, and but for the broad white brow and beautiful eyes the face might have been pronounced a disagreeable one. The head was set proudly and carried well, and the whole bearing impressed every one with a singular superiority of which the owner was totally unconscious.

Joan Berdan was peculiar. Braver than most women, and fascinating to a dangerous degree, she exercised a charm over people that eclipsed the beauty of others completely. Her voice had a subdued music in it that rendered soprano chatter tuneless. Her

colour rose beneath the clear skin with every variation of feeling, and the mouth and eyes laughed together.

To me she was irresistible, her rapid perception and generous mind thrusting a way through difficulties and helping to ease the burthens of others, regardless of what inconvenience or sorrow might arise for herself by so doing.

A perfect affability of manner rendered her friends with strangers at once, and before this unsophisticated lady Mrs. Sutherland and her daughters appeared constrained and awkward.

When aunt returned we were sitting in the housekeeper's room talking — Joan by the open window, with Jowler at her side. The three ladies halted obviously as Joan, with inimitable smile and grace, advanced, saying, in the most irreproachable of English—

"How do you do, Aunt Sutherland?"

The meeting was very different from mine. I had been timid. Joan was devoid of all

nervousness, and treated them in a bewitchingly cool manner that lopped down their air of arrogance instantly. Her pretty brown head had a carriage of its own that declared most decidedly its objection to being patted, while her figure, if not so statuesque as that of Isabel and Charlotte, was certainly more calculated, by its plumpness and grace, to invite admiration.

When aunt and her daughters had departed to dress, I saw an amused smile cross Joan's face, and, half laughing, she stooped and bestowed a kiss upon Jowler's rough head.

"Miss Gedise, it is odd that we two should be here, nieces on opposite sides. I wonder which will carry off the crown of approval. You, of course, for I already see I have perplexed my majestic aunt and piqued my lovely cousins. They are disappointed. I know they expected a big, red-faced girl, with a braced-up figure, decked out in her mother's wedding dress, and nearly beside herself from

bashfulness. You know they did, you know they have had nightmare on my account for the past week."

I could not deny this statement, and she took my silence for consent, and proceeded—

"This arises from always worshipping at one shrine. They know little of any county save their own. Come, let us go and dress. I hope you won't think me a worry. I may trespass upon both your time and patience ere our acquaintance ceases. Instinct tells me I shall, for there is something in your face that appeals to my gentler nature, and influences it for good. Shake hands; let us ratify a bond of friendship!"

She grasped my hand warmly, the intelligent eyes lighted with more sincerity than it had been my lot to perceive before. Totally dissimilar though we were in appearance and temperament, some chord of unison had been unwittingly struck, showing that our dispositions were not too unequal to put friendship

out of the range of possibility. For her I felt an admiration which I fancy would have been better suited to a man. Women do not generally admire each other, but I maintain that every woman must either admire or envy Joan Berdan. To attempt to reach her level was absurd; it could only be attained by a woman of similar ability, and she must be subjected to corresponding treatment.

With every movement and expression, she dashed you in amongst your fellows again as a "woman," while her intellect and nerve bore her on with the marching army, the strength of both qualifying her to be a friend to man and a protector to her weakly sisters.

I did not "envy," I "admired." I had sense enough to discern her superiority, sufficient justice to allow that it existed; so I made for myself a place in the noblest heart that ever beat in the breast of a woman.

CHAPTER IV.

HER room was near mine, the doors almost opposite, and I could hear the low voice chanting a song as she dressed. I fancied myself swift, but I found Miss Berdan had gone when I opened my door. I concluded she had made her way to the drawing-room, and not caring to idle the time before dinner, I passed on to the housekeeper's room. There the first person I saw was Joan, standing at the courtyard door, feeding the pigeons with some cake, her tiny white hand full of the sweet crumbs.

"Is not this a beauty?" called she, without turning. "I have not such a splendid bird amongst my tribe."

"Yes," replied I, "but I thought you were in the drawing-room, Miss Berdan."

"Did you? Well, I looked in and saw nothing but magnificent space, so I turned faint, and came here instead. I did not learn to make my toilet in Surrey, else it would not be so rapid. If you don't mind, call me Jocky. Aunt will say Joan, and that is sufficient for me to struggle with at once. Poor, shy little thing! I wonder how you exist in this proud atmosphere. Are they all alike?"

"No, Yorke is quite different. You will like him; he is liberal-minded, warm-hearted, and true."

I stopped; she was laughing.

"What a paragon Yorke must be. And you and every one else bow down to him, I suppose? I must rehearse, else my paganism will be observed. You must excuse me, Penny, but we Yorkshire people don't set up idols. We never like any one to come amongst

us with a flourish of trumpets; we have an ignorant notion that it is done to distract attention from themselves. Very much the same thing as the husband pointing out some phenomenon in the sky, while the wife picks your pocket."

"You will not find Yorke a thief."

"No, for I have nothing worth stealing. I am moneyless, beautiless, and, worse than all, heartless."

"How can you say so, Jocky? You could love?"

"Perhaps; I have never tried, but I can endure and hide my agony. If I loved hopelessly, I should do like the Spartan Boy, cover it up, and give my life to smother its cry."

I smiled. The idea of her loving hopelessly! I judged the man was not born who could be indifferent to such witchery.

At dinner a discovery was made—Yorke was missing. He had gone to Leatherhead and lost his train, no doubt. The conversation

flagged; Jocky was not a voluble talker. She did not dearly love the sound of her own voice, but the varied expressions that chased each other across the calm face gave promise of rare ability to amuse and entertain.

After tea, aunt asked Jocky to play.

"I hardly ever do so, and never what is called practice. I will do my best with pleasure. Music is the only thing that affects my nerve; I cannot always play, you know."

Her step was firm, yet noiseless; her carriage indicative of aptness to command. There was about her a dozing majesty that sometimes flashed into full power, and gave those who only saw this side of her character an idea that she was harsh and ill-tempered.

For a second her small hands rested upon the polished notes of the Erard, and then came a rush of melody by no means remarkable for its high-class style or difficulty of composition, but for the unmistakable inspiration with which it was executed. Her state-

ment was correct; she could not always play, and she never practised. Music was to her no mechanical performance, and labour would have exhausted the genius. The theory she understood, but she depended not upon the talent of others to gain celebrity for herself. The melody she played beat time to her thoughts, and, without knowing why, her listeners were pleased. The fascination peculiar to herself crept into her music. The fan lay passive upon aunt's knee. Isabel and Charlotte fidgeted. They were affected by the operation of this novel charm, and could not define its cause.

My heart plunged and beat; I felt half afraid of being overpowered by emotion I could not control. With one sharp chord the music ceased, and the eyes, languid enough, met mine. The look was but transitory, and the next expression was the habitual one of vivacity.

Some one says those great soft brown eyes

are suggestive of affection and gray ones of intellect. It may be, but these orbs were full of deep thought and ability, though I must own I never saw them assume that disagreeable glitter frequently taken for intelligence.

"Your music is very good, Joan; where did you learn?"

"At school."

"And you, of course, sing?"

"Very little, if any. I have so feeble a voice, especially since my illness."

"Indeed! You should persevere; I think a voice may be made. I exerted myself greatly with Isabel, and now her voice is strong enough for anything. Every one admires singing more than playing."

"No doubt," responded Jocky, smiling, and perceiving the mother's desire that her children should excel.

"I should like to hear cousin Isabel."

"I will sing directly," said the beauty con-

descendingly, "after Penny has played. Shall that be the way, mamma?"

"Yes, my dearest."

Believing I had one judge in the audience, I played a piece of Schubert's, a thing I had not done in the drawing-room since I entered the house.

There were four in the apartment; I only played to one—she who was leaning forward with heaving breast and parted lips, whose soul shone through her eyes and approved as no tongue could. She exercised power over me, and I obeyed her silent command, and sat down by her when I had finished. Her voice, hushed with emotion, greeted me.

"Thank you—for ever; your music has lifted me out of myself and tuned my imagination afresh. You possess what I lack—power to handle the sacred thoughts of the dead. I cannot, I feel too much; I hesitate—I *fear*, at least. The spirit of the departed genius seems to meet me in the glorious

sounds bequeathed to the world, and my mind loses its hold on the present, and strays into a maze of the past or future, and my hands, deprived of their guide, become useless."

"You should practise," said I, bewildered by this confession.

"It is no use; I cannot stand the tension on my nerves long enough to profit. I cannot forget what I am doing. I cannot close my understanding to the thoughts the sounds create in my brain, and lacerate the inspiration of another day after day. No; that immortal music I must leave to those who feel less; when I hear it I forget reality and subside into imagination. So you can understand I cannot play."

Ere I could reply, Isabel commenced her song—a very shrill supplication to a lover to return to her beneath some sheltering tree. The voice had been exercised and coaxed into strength. It was high, ringing, and strong enough to have hunted hounds with, and

devoid of every atom of sweetness. At times, it alone resembled the angry scream of a macaw.

I glanced at Jocky. Her face was pale, and the lips trembled so I could scarcely catch the enquiry.

"What man would return, solicited thus? I shall not be able to stand much more. My teeth are on edge now. Do you think it will soon be over?"

"Yes, there is not another verse; we will go into the garden directly it is concluded."

"So that is *their* idea of music," said she, as I closed the door. "If your oracle, Yorke, appreciates *that*, I shall assuredly differ from you in your opinion of him."

"He does not; he always escapes from the room. And he says he hated music before I came."

"And no wonder, if she treated him to similar performances. I believe many dogs

'howl at music because their sense of tune is more refined than some human beings'."

A light burnt in the dining-room. I looked in. There sat Yorke, taking tea.

"That you, Penny? I heard the screams of rage, but did not feel equal to attending."

"Yes, and this is Miss Berdan, Yorke."

She stood near the door in her pretty dress of buff and white lace, her neck vieing with the lace for supremacy of hue. They bowed and shook hands like most people, yet there was something unusual in their mode of accomplishing it. They were slightly confused. Each face wore an aspect of determination, that was the only permissible betrayal of some inward disparity. They avoided looking at one another, yet, when either spoke to me, each in turn grasped the opportunity to gaze intently upon the other.

"Where are you going to?" inquired Yorke.

"Into the garden," replied I. "Come, Jocky."

His eyes followed her, and when we halted on the door-step, he was behind.

In the most natural manner she waited for him, and they strolled off together silently. I walked at Jocky's side, and tried to converse with Yorke. But his eyes rested upon the face between us as he answered me. She looked preoccupied, which irritated Yorke. When she glanced up at him, in the wickedly charming manner so becoming to her, or uttered some of the clever pithy remarks that lingered on her lips continually, his face lighted, and he summoned every faculty to charm in turn. We traversed the avenue and entered the lane, the moonlight displaying the thick white dust along the winding road.

Very gentle was Night; she disturbed not the commune of hearts strangely troubled, beating a new music against the will of each.

It was very still in that leafy lane. The chirp of the grasshopper, the coo of the wood-

pigeon were not reminders of the bustling world. Something was hovering near that tranquilised all, and suggested to me that "two were company, three none." I drew aside, and they forgot me. The fields of standing corn, ripe and yellow, scarcely rustled. The distant cry of some harvester's baby invited thoughts of home and united possessions. And they stood side by side in the moonlight, catching the grains of love the angels scattered.

Yorke, with bent head and pocketed hands, his moustache resting on his breast, restless, kicking a stone that lay in the dust. Jocky looking over the scented hedges into the feathery clouds that clustered near the moon, her hands lightly clasped, her face resolute, full of thought.

"I wonder why every one cannot be rich?" muttered Yorke.

"Because double provision must be made for fools. Some one who cannot work has the other half of your fortune."

"That's a mollifying suggestion, but it does away with none of the thorns in the existing reality. The shoe still pinches, Miss Berdan."

"Who? You?"

"Yes."

"Have you not sufficient?"

"Under some circumstances, yes; under others, no."

"Then work for more, and when you have scraped together a fortune you will not care a pin for it."

"How do you know that?"

"Because it's man's nature to covet what he has not got. Possession does away with the excitement of contest, and battle is man's element."

"But you allow that ambition is the father of success?"

"Yes; and when does a man consider he *has* succeeded? They no sooner have one thing than they desire another. Is not what you call ambition frequently discontent?"

"Why should not one man equal another?"

"Why is not every bird a swan?"

"O, that's a different matter. Those things were arranged to meet our requirements and their capabilities, and each would be useless out of its appointed place."

"Exactly, and since you see that no error has been committed in their location, don't you think it is possible that men are stationed where their talents will be best appreciated and most useful?"

"Am I to understand that you are satisfied with *your* position?"

"Perfectly. I was born the child of a Yorkshire mill-owner, neither rich nor beautiful. I have no regret that I was not born a princess, and I intend to evince my satisfaction with my sphere by doing my best in it."

"What is 'best'?"

"God's will; and *our* best is not to murmur at it."

"Tuwhit, tuwhit," cried the owls in the

belfry, and the strong simple faith reached the sure record.

Two men came along rather unsteadily, and Jocky drew nearer Yorke with unaffacted confidence in his protection. He saw not the men, he noticed only her, and I saw a light in his eyes that had not been there before. He coveted not wealth now, but the girl who stood by his side with all the intensity of his strong nature, and full force of passion that had slumbered hitherto.

My rest that night was disturbed by dreams, and, with the sun, I rose. Returning from a ramble, I met Jocky, charmingly fresh, in her print dress, clasped to the full figure at the waist, with a leather belt. She was bending over a large blush rose admiringly, and its colour matched the delicate pink of her nails and palms.

"Who gave you that?"

"Your favourite—Mr. Yorke. I saw him in the rose garden, wandering about like an unhappy spirit."

He was naturally tranquil; if a few hours could change him, what would weeks do?

My room Jocky made her haunt, and undertook to teach Eunice, while I saw after household duties, thereby causing my release earlier. Eunice was idle, and wanted a perpetual spurring, but her new governess interested her by the force of her own will, and I soon perceived that Jocky was an efficient teacher. She had the knack of imparting knowledge, and Eunice's attention lasted to the end of the lesson for the first time since I had known her.

Then Jocky opened the piano and played a Russian polka splendidly, in a wild inspiriting style that made my feet itch to dance. Quick breathing caught my ear. Yorke stood in the doorway, with brilliant eyes and flushed cheeks. Holding up his finger to enforce silence, he dropped into a chair and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening.

For nearly half-an-hour Jocky played, almost all German music, and after a maddening galop, jumped up laughing.

"I wonder if *I* shall ever want to die?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated Yorke.

"I did not know you were present, Mr. Sutherland. That remark was intended for Penny."

"I cannot congratulate you upon the wisdom of it," replied I.

"I am not a sage person, and I am not accustomed to praise in any form. But spite of the chills I receive, my brain will occasionally give birth to an idea which is too insane to occur to any one else."

"No; don't say that, but what caused you to think of Death?"

"An innate desire to run contrary to time, place, and surroundings. There is nothing in this pleasant room, or bright day, to suggest departure, yet I fancy sorrow treads upon the heels of joy."

"What can you know of sorrow? You must love ere you can regret?"

"And that is hard to do. Especially for me who am told I have no soul."

"I should like to know who told you that, and what provocation they had for doing it?"

The blue eyes glittered jealously.

"A poor noodle."

"Pray do you call us all 'poor noodles' because like moths we flutter round the flame until singed? Feminine pity would probably be granted to the moth, but the other is quite a different case."

"Is it; I am too inexperienced to form any opinion on the subject. But this 'noodle' could dance, and he wanted to know if I had ever been what is called 'in love'?"

"I hate dancing." Aside—"Curse him—"

"So do I, but I like watching people's faces and learning what they think."

"You may know too much of human nature. There is little perfection in it."

"So I see."

The curl of the lip was ridiculously expressive. I smiled.

She had read Yorke aright. I was annoyed, she would not think so highly of him now, and this was the first atom of jealousy I had beheld in him.

CHAPTER V.

Jocky was an acknowledged success,—all liked her. Her amiability and frank manner won all hearts.

Albert declared had he been single he would have proposed. While her favour was at its height, William came and brought with him his American friend Travers Thorne, who carried on the business of timber merchant in Quebec. He had visited at Ringly Royal before, and his photograph graced Charlotte's album. I had been given to understand that he was devoted to Charlotte, and that young damsel affected the greatest unconcern as to his feelings. That she could

be indifferent to so handsome a man, I doubted; it was unwoman-like. No woman is indifferent to admiration, and any man may marry the woman he likes, if he will openly show his preference, and persevere.

There was a sparkle of pride in aunt's eye as she surveyed her daughters lounging on the couches ten minutes before dinner. Certainly they were beautiful; but, to my mind, intelligent Jocky, in her simple white dress, formed so decided a contrast as to be a dangerous rival.

The first to enter was Yorke, a shade paler than usual. Then followed Mr. Thorne and William. William was very good-looking, but Mr. Thorne had the advantage. He possessed a most distinguished face, and the manners of a worldly man. Though English by birth, continental and Canadian life had remodeled him, and made him so far their own that he might have passed for some Federal general easily. His toilet was made

with elegant simplicity, but with the scrupulous exactness that betokens studied attention.

He paid Charlotte some deferential compliments, so neatly wrapped in silver paper that they totally lost the vulgar gloss of flattery. Into the most commonplace remarks he infused a deeper meaning than the words ordinarily spoken would have implied, and hazarded a degree of interest and proprietorship in things appertaining to Charlotte, by no means disagreeable to her. She yielded herself to his charming without an effort, and one might have supposed the end would be a wedding, but for an amused expression that, when unnoticed, flitted across his countenance.

Aunt evidently was alone weighing the questions, money and position; and as these were satisfactory, she made no attempt to stop the intimacy. Moreover, it might be the means of bringing some other tardy suitor to the fore. Mothers know what a spur jealousy

is, and the value of a *cousin*. Envy has made a man propose before to-day for what he did not want. He stood in ecstasy while she played by the yard, and murmured some three-cornered compliment when the piece was concluded. Of me he took little notice, or of Jocky, who sat talking to William and Yorke. It was only when being asked to play, Jocky begged aunt to excuse her, that I observed him look at her. His gaze was more earnest than it need have been.

My attention was now attracted by Charlotte asking him some questions about America. They conversed for some time, only snatches of their conversation penetrating to my ears, till an almost excited "I'll bet you half-a-dozen gloves you are," from statuesque Charlotte, roused me and every one else.

"What is that, dearest?" enquired her mother fondly.

"I tell Mr. Thorne that our maze is almost as intricate as the one at Hampton Court, and

he defies all forests or woods to puzzle him after the Canadian ones."

"Possibly; but I think you would find our little wilderness rather perverse, Mr. Thorne," replied aunt, smiling.

"I have no doubt of that, and after such a challenge, I feel bound to try, were it to cost my life. Will some one show me the way to this labyrinth, that I may test its powers by moonlight?"

"Nonsense, Thorne; wait for daylight," said William.

"No; I am on my mettle, and prefer going now, if Mrs. Sutherland will excuse me."

"Certainly; but you must have a guide. I think Eunice and Penny are the surest."

"Yes, I'll take you with pleasure, Mr. Thorne," cried Eunice, "and having piloted you to the centre, and warned you to mind the pit, I shall leave you to find your own way out."

I had risen to accompany Eunice, when Charlotte cried—

"Let us all go; it is lovely out to-night."

A general move followed this proposal, and we went out.

"Now for my guide. Miss Eunice, remember your offer!"

"Coming, Mr. Thorne. Penny!"

My arm was grasped by Jocky, and the idea occurred to me to take her also.

We started. The windings of the wood were dark, save where an opening in the trees allowed the moonlight to settle on the space.

The once famous cockpit was reached, its dangers proclaimed, and then Eunice commanded Mr. Thorne to stand with his back to us for five minutes, till we got out of sight.

"Stay," exclaimed that gentleman; "some one take pity on me, my nerve fails. One of you accompany me."

"Ask Miss Berdan. Penny and I know every inch of the ground."

Eunice's suggestion had been made ere I

could prevent it, though why I should seek to do so I had no clear notion.

"Share my pilgrimage," solicited Mr. Thorne, turning to Jocky, "we shall be able to discover additional charms together."

"Very well," replied she, laughing, "but my bump of locality will be found slight."

"If we don't come out in fifteen minutes call for us, Penny; else we may ramble for an hour."

I promised, and stole away with Eunice.

On the bridge stood Yorke. He looked up and enquired, somewhat sharply—

"Where is Miss Berdan?"

"With Mr. Thorne, in the Wilderness," replied Eunice; "they are going to wander together."

A foot stamped so savagely that the rickety bridge shivered.

"Yorke!" ejaculated Eunice.

"Cramp, little sister, cramp. You will

have it one day. Some one wants you indoors, Eunice."

Away she sped, never questioning the truth of the statement.

"Who wants her?" asked I, more unbelieving.

"I don't know; Jowler, probably."

The moustache was being unmercifully plucked, and he regarded me reproachfully.

"How came you to leave Jocky — Miss Berdan—behind?"

"Eunice proposed it after Mr. Thorne asked for a companion. I am not Miss Berdan's guardian, Yorke."

Again the vicious stamp.

"Of course he asked for a companion, feeling pretty sure who was unacquainted with the place."

"They will be here presently," said I, "though I cannot see what difference it makes to you whom Miss Berdan talks with."

"Then I'll tell you—the difference love makes, and no greater can there be. They will not come presently. Jocky will talk, Thorne will listen and loiter, and take every path but the one which ends here."

He stood angry and jealous. A nightingale, warbling a love melody in the wood behind, irritated him more by proposing unwelcome thoughts.

I ventured no soothing remark. I was engrossed by the startling intelligence that he loved Jocky.

"What would aunt say?"

The time expired, and they came not. Silently I re-entered the wood to seek them, according to Jocky's request. I marched right on to where we had parted, and there I heard voices.

On a rustic seat, of Yorke's contrivance, they sat side by side. They had not walked three inches. Surprise checked my greeting at first, and directly after their conversation—

"I had no idea you noticed me."

"I did; I saw you the first moment I entered the room."

"And you never spoke, yet so near."

"No, I should have betrayed myself if I had, and then no such (to me) happy opportunity as this would have occurred. May angels guard the magnificent Miss Charlotte for putting this wood-exploring scheme on foot. Miss Berdan, have you ever noticed how easily we mortals bend according to fate's direction? I feel as if I had known you years, because—those mated in heaven pair readily on earth."

The *blasé* eyes gleamed in the moonlight as they looked into the innocent brown ones, and a ringed hand covered one of hers.

"No, Mr. Thorne," replied Jocky collectedly, "I have observed no such peculiarity. The people I belong to are too plebeian to be romantic. Their imagination soars no higher than how to make the best dinner out of the

poorest ingredients. But," sinking her voice ever so little, and assuming a confidential manner towards the sinner beside her, which gratified him evidently, "with you I do feel different."

"You do? I can hardly believe it possible. It seems too great happiness for—"

"A scamp like you. That's the honestest thought you've had since you came."

"You have mistaken my meaning utterly, Miss Berdan."

"And so have you mine. I will explain; you can please yourself. I do feel different with you; I feel aware of the disagreeable fact that I am in the presence of one whose appearance alone entitles him to the appellation 'gentleman.'"

He started.

"Miss Berdan, this is too severe, too unjust."

"Will you put it to the public test, and learn from the opinions of others whether

your remarks have not justified me in making such a statement? It will appear faulty to some, I know. It is more truthful than polite. And this is my excuse—my principles are in better order than my manners. What is yours for making love to me?"

"The charm you exercise over mankind. I may be the first to own it; I shall not be the last. Others will feel as I do in your presence—'happy;' and I expect some one will fare better than I have done, for there is a world of love deep in your heart, if one could only reach it. You have guarded yourself against love so far, but there will come a day when your heart will throb as mine does now, and my impulsive confession will seem no sin. You have it in your power to make some one perfectly happy or infernally wretched. If only I could be that 'some one'!"

"After what I have just told you?"

"Yes, I forgive that, and could forgive much more. The bitterest thing you can say

is not wholly bitter to me, for I remember who said it. A poisoned draught is sweet if given by a loved hand. For love is blind, they say."

"Then I am not in love, for I am fully aware of your desire to deceive me, and, if possible, to amuse yourself at my expense. I dare say you have succeeded, and will succeed again; you are expert at the game; but if you want to canter over the course easily, don't try any pranks with a Northerner. A girl reared amongst the moors and hills, whose cheek has been roughened by the north winds, will see through the mask you wear, and find courage to tell you so. A Southerner, like my cousin Charlotte, nursed in the lap of luxury, with affections ripened by constant exposure to the warmth of prosperity, will listen, and probably believe."

"You think the South people weaker than the North?"

"I do. The blood of the Scandinavian

race still lingers in the veins of many Northern families, and shows itself in foresight, dogged perseverance, and capability to endure hardship. A living is more difficult to obtain in the North; the winter is longer and harder, the summer shorter, crops scantier. There requires a clear head, a stout heart, a muscular hand to guide the Moorland plough. Well may the faces be sterner and more deeply lined, for they have to meet the wind of adversity with the edge on. In the South all appears softer, easier, a more abundant harvest after less toil, and the sweetness of the clime extends to the people and their lives. Care is not their constant guest, suspense does not stand behind the door. Their faculties are not sharpened by anxiety, or their spirits blunted by over-taxed energies."

"You are not an admirer of the Southerners, Miss Berdan?"

"Yes, to some extent. It is their country I thoroughly like. The people are lazy,

mean, and deceitful, faint-hearted, and selfish. Their country is lovely, but mine is equally beautiful; their's rich in artistic scenery, gurgling streams and wooded dales, mine handsome in the grim beauty of sweeping moorlands and rugged hills, upon whose summit the swift clouds seem to rest. O! there is no place like bonnie Yorkshire, after all. One's heart beats quicker, stronger, where the purple heather blooms beneath your feet, and shelters the lapwing's home. Little matter how keen the blast without, the hearts are warm within, and if the conversation is broader in accent, it has a more genuine ring, a deeper meaning, for it follows the bent of greater intelligence."

She had risen while speaking, and stood by a tree, her eyes sparkling, her lips parted.

A smothered exclamation escaped the American merchant.

Had she looked at him, she would have had no cause to cavil at the falsity of his admiration.

Charlotte, with her beauty and elegance, was powerless to call such an expression to his face.

I shivered as a breeze stirred the full breast, and the enthusiastic countenance turned to his. Actual beauty she had none, but some inexpressible charm belonged to her that I have seen possessed by no other woman. I foresaw that a great life was hers, that the radiance from such a star must extend far, and be the only light to some.

I remembered the young fellow on the bridge, fretted, anxious, and I saw this one with flushed, covetous face, while she stood heartlessly cool between the two. She was strangely insensible to love, and this drove the men to desperation.

The completest victory follows a defeat.

A few leaves fluttered down and settled on the skirt of her white dress. She tossed them off, and said—

"We must go, Mr. Thorne. What shall you say to account for our absence?"

"That I lost my way."

"That is untrue."

"Well, then, that I lost my heart; that *is* true, and I shall never find it again."

"Have I it?"

"Yes."

"Then take it."

"It is useless to me now."

"And to me."

She turned and stepped quickly down the path, passing me closely.

Pushing my way through the trees, I made a circle, and then called "Jocky! Jocky!" which speedily elicited a reply, and they waited for me.

"How long you have been," said I.

"Yes; Mr. Thorne wanted to air his imagination a little, and tried to persuade me it was reality, which, with my hereditary bluntness, I failed to see. We had an altercation, and finally a dissolution, and we have arranged that he shall enact the same thrilling scene to

a more appreciative audience next time. That is it, is it not, sir?"

The man worried his lip in rage, and made no reply. A low laugh escaped her. Yorke still guarded the bridge, and looked up sharply at our approach.

I saw Jocky's pretty shoulders elevate for a second, then she drew back. She was speaking to Yorke, when I turned, after crossing the bridge. His face beamed as only she had power to make it, and I hoped he might be the one more fortunate than others.

Mr. Thorne walked on; I waited, half hidden by a tree. There was a crisis at hand, betokened by a great silence.

I listened. I heard Yorke's voice, wonderfully tender, asking—

"Can you love me, darling, all my life, till death?"

"Yes, and after."

I peeped round the branch. Her hands rested on his shoulders, his arms were clasped

round her waist; one face raised, the other bent over it. They were happy; O God! so happy for that little time.

Could he have heard, as I had, her reply to a similar question not ten minutes before, he would have realised the value, formed some notion of the quality of that affection which would last longer than life.

The sarcasm that erected round her a barrier impassable to the weather-beaten *roué*, had vanished. Her simple, womanly heart was bared, her reply was as truthful as her face. Now a child would have clung to her who a few moments earlier a man had cowered before.

Perhaps this docility was as unaccountable to Yorke as to me, for he asked suddenly—

"How much do you love me, Jocky?"

"How much, you unbelieving Jew? Do you think love is like tape, to be measured by the yard? If I took my heart out this moment you would not see 'Yorke' inscribed thereon.

Be satisfied; I love you sufficiently to trust you with my life, present and future; to share with you in weal or woe, to help you work for your benefit and God's glory. If you desire that moonstruck affection, half crazy state, sugaring the gravy and salting the tea, loss of appetite and sleep, you must seek elsewhere for it; it is out of my province. You have your place in heart and brain, but not entire possession of either."

"Dutiful wives think only of their husbands."

"Dutiful fiddlesticks! Don't let us crane our necks too far. I take it, we know nothing of either. When I am a wife I may change my opinion, at present I see no reason why every faculty is to be prostrated at one shrine."

She commenced humming a waltz.

"Am I never to get any sign of love from you, then? Belief must be nourished."

"Bah! true belief is self-sustaining, and takes no notice of chance scraps."

"Jocky, don't be cruel; will a sweet word never pass your lips? Must my heart ache eternally for want of a tender greeting or unasked-for kiss? Out of the wealth of your soul will you not be generous to one whose life is in your keeping? You may bless it or curse it. Think what you are doing, and do not stifle every gentle impulse."

"Oh, I am bewildered. This comes of meddling with what you don't understand, Miss Joan. Yorke, I know no more of love than I do of astronomy; when I found something was wrong with me I should have gone back to the Moors, and let the wind blow it away. Will you forgive me? I can only promise to *try*. It is easy to love my way; very difficult yours. I am half wild, possessed of a tantalising desire to go my way, not another's, owning a will no one has hobbled—a slave to courage, that placed my life in jeopardy more than once. Don't command me, I *never obey;* don't display your

authority, or you will find you have none; don't ask for a kiss, you may get bitten. Yorke Sutherland, they *say* I am the child of the—devil."

I feared as I listened. Would he understand her? Perhaps not. From her description I never should have done, but from my own observations I did. And I saw how over-conscientiousness caused her to magnify every fault, how her courage failed at the prospect of a cage like a poor bird's, and how the untamed spirit would, if pressed too hard, make a bound for liberty. The only power likely to have force with her was attraction. Some one nobler, cleverer, more daring, might attract her, but the first *order* given would snap the link.

Yorke's hands were stroking the soft hair, tenderly, his face full of the longing his tongue forebore to express, bent near the white startled one.

"There, we will talk no more. Don't

tremble so; you shall love *your* way, darling, and not be hurried or frightened again. You are as wild as the moor birds round your home, as fresh as the heather where no hoofs have stamped. Are they all like you in the North?"

"I don't know; in the towns they have French fashions and London manners like you, and they are commended, while I am reproved. Yorke, I am not half good enough for you; I shall bring you ill luck, and you will at last hate me. And yet, for all I know will come to pass, I *do* want to keep you."

The leaves lay against my hot cheek; surely we were harbouring either an enchantress or a devil. God help Yorke and guide me, for I liked her better than ever. I saw her clinging to him passionately, and I crept away. Such changeful moods I could little understand, and I wondered how long a man would tolerate it.

CHAPTER VI.

YORKE lived on a miserable allowance of love; she avoided any opportunity of being alone with him, and he bore it patiently. No mention did she make to me of what had passed between them till one afternoon I caught them in my room.

"I am delighted you are come, Penny. Perhaps you can manage Yorke; I cannot."

He laughed and kissed her again. At last she broke from him, and, having the table between them, commenced to be impudent.

"Penny, I have done what all wise people and old maids consider great folly — got engaged to your saint—and I now have grave doubts that the compact will ever be carried

out. Moreover, what I, in my ignorance of such matters, fancied love, may have been a species of moon-stroke."

She threw herself on to the couch, while Yorke looked at me with eyes full of distress.

"Penny, *can* you teach her to love? At least, can you make her understand that she does love, and that it is not a stupid or wicked thing to do? She wants to love me, she does love me, yet she persists in mortifying herself and me with hideous doubts, and determinedly stifles every breath the desire draws."

"I am afraid not. I can only say, to love honestly is not wicked, but to lie in the face of conscience is, and did any one worthy of my regard ask me to marry him, I should. Any life before that of a governess."

"Yes," retorted Jocky animatedly, "my experience in that line is lively. You are astonished; you did not know I had been 'out'! There are several episodes in my life you are unacquainted with—and ever shall

be. This one, however, I don't mind relating. Two years ago I had a terrible illness, and, when recovered, Dr. Brierly said the best thing I could do would be to go South for some months. Money does not grow on the Moors; therefore, we have very little of it. I longed, I pined to go, and one day saw an advertisement in the paper to the effect that a lady was required, on mutual terms, to instruct one little girl in a county joining this.

"I wrote, and in reply, was informed that I should be treated exactly as one of the family, have a bedroom to myself, and laundress. Mrs. Oldgrave was disappointed my French was not fluent, but made no enquiries respecting German; therefore, I kept the knowledge of being able to speak it to myself. I considered her grasping, and thought the bargain somewhat unequal as it stood, but as she lived where I wanted to go, I accepted the situation. I arrived at the close of a

January day, and found the house stuck away by itself on the top of a hill, miles from both village and station. Mrs. Oldgrave received me in a small drawing-room, strewn with Parisian riff-raff of all descriptions, and where there was a bad smell from some drain. In a head-dress of patent lace at 10d. a yard, and a crimson shawl, this person gave herself grandiose airs in the musty room, and finally had me shown to my sleeping apartment. No wonder I was to have it to myself; no one could have desired to share it who did not want rheumatism or fever.

"A low, damp, narrow box of a room, jutting into a wet wood of fig and fir trees, all outside walls save the corner, where it was tacked on to the house. The floor had a sickening swing in it when you moved, and at one end the paper had given up all attempts at sticking to the wall. The bed had been industriously sucking up the moisture of the room, and upon the under side was actually

wet. The army of rats that fought and bounced about between the walls assisted the foxes in the woods to keep one awake. Clammy, stiff, and with throbbing temples, I rose in the morning, wrath against the woman who could expose a fellow creature to what might be her death. I hardly liked to complain, but hoped the weather would improve and do something towards drying the room.

"I found, however, that the bedroom was only in keeping with the rest of the treatment destined for the governess. Mrs. Oldgrave would painstakingly search through a dish of stewed rabbit for the piece with the most bone and the least meat, and then inform me she was paying seven-and-sixpence a lesson for Mora's (Maria's) music at Madame Mascall's. Every meal witnessed the resurrection of some Baroness whom she had met at a watering-place boarding-house, and whose picture represented a retired town cook, and the governess theme.

"Showing every false tooth in her head, she would expatiate upon the superior qualities of her past governesses, and where there was a home for decayed ones. How they rang the changes each morning, with omelets and deviled kidneys, at 'the Baroness's,' while her son scratched his head over his plate and gave utterance to the intellectual remark, 'Deuced nice pickles these, Mor.' The sweet child I was to teach was considered by her mother, and considered herself, very learned. But with the exception of a choice vocabulary of slang, and a readiness to 'cuss' her hoop, 'damn' her pen, and contradict me, she was in no degree extraordinary.

"I found her backward in obedience, politeness, knowledge, all save eating, and swollen to distortion, like her mother, with self-satisfaction and envy. I stayed but one month with this noble family, who were well grown in all but mind and soul, and when I go out again it shall be where

there's less pomposity and more true refinement."

This sketch, cleverly drawn and tinted with sarcasm, cost the artist no visible effort, only the flashing eye, which the long lid almost concealed, betrayed the intense hate and abhorrence the treatment described had awakened. Revenge may be the nursling of a depraved mind, but when a memory is not on the slant, everything cannot run off.

"You never shall go out again, my darling," exclaimed Yorke, overcome by affection.

She extended her pretty hand to keep him off, while replying—

"Don't be too sure; I may not marry you, and I am certain no one else will ask me. You are sadly wanting in proper pride and discernment, or you would not have proposed to me, Yorke."

Whenever the conversation took this channel I became possessed of a strong desire to divert it into another. At such times a

shadow settled upon Jocky's face, and she seemed to speak more from a determination to perform her duty than from any inclination of her own.

Some spirit, either real or imaginary, walked side by side with that bright young life, and robbed it too often of the sunlight.

People sometimes do curious things, and I could not help regarding aunt's intention of giving a ball on Isabel's birthday as strange. The idea was born suddenly, barely allowing time for preparation. But money and numbers overcome most difficulties, and after the house had swarmed with men for two days, the event seemed inevitable.

I thought supper the great obstacle, having two town cooks on my hands who had omitted to sign the pledge. They were supplied by Gunter to manufacture the delicacies that would not bear carriage, and the shelves in the still-room presently groaned beneath the weight of heathen temples, Swiss chateaux,

and water nymphs in jellies and creams of every size and hue.

To Ellen, the maid, the decision between roses and carnations was so agonising that she fell into an hysterical fit, out of which it took no end of sal-volatile to recall her. When revived, she dressed her ladies, who, if haughtiness and Juno-like magnificence can render lovely, and produce that compound termed Beauty, ought to have been queens of the assembly. By six o'clock everything was so satisfactory that a halt was called, and some retired to bed for an hour or two's repose. I do not include aunt or her two daughters, though, perhaps, their state of petulant anxiety was as fatiguing as our labour.

Those of the household who had worked against time in this unusual manner were the maids, the old butler and footman, Eunice, Jocky, and I. To add to our discomfort, the heat had been intense, and defied all attempts at mitigation made by blinds. The sun had

scorched and blistered the whole day, and we had toiled through it all. The kitchens were suffocating, the cooks bathed in perspiration every time I entered.

Tired, and teased with a nervous headache, I sat down to rest in the housekeeper's room with Jocky. Eunice went to bed, a buz emanated from the servants' hall and prevented the tantalising insects outside from having it all their own way. Jowler lay in the far corner of the room, and Maggie nearly fell over the sleeping brute when she entered with the tea-tray. It was some moments before I dragged myself out of the deep easy-chair to make the tea. I lay, looking into the courtyard, with its glittering milk-pails on which the sun rested. The big elm stretched one huge arm protectingly over the well, helping to keep the crystal water cold when the thermometer was at blood heat. The chinks of the old stones were wedged with ferns and mosses, who had bidden to their

home delicate white and pink flowers that raised their tiny heads very modestly, and repaid no one for the trouble of gathering them.

Jocky was on the sofa, with her head in a pillow.

"Penny," said the mellow voice suddenly, "I wonder if you are thinking as I am—that life does not recoup one for the worry of living. When there is not annoyance there is fatigue. Here we are all in health, and free—ostensibly—from disgrace, so aunt must needs give a ball, and plunge us, during tropical heat, into a whirlwind of exertion and excitement, which terminates in being obliged to dress like a peacock, feel totally unlike one's-self, and dance, smile, bow, and chatter till three in the morning, when I, for one, would very much rather be between the sheets with the window open."

"No doubt you would; but young people ought not to pamper these desires; a hurry does one good, Jocky. Ladies generally live on dress and admiration."

"Do they? Then I am not a lady, for I have managed to exist on something perfectly different. I never had more dresses than I knew what to do with, and not at any time a spark of admiration. Just now I am disgusted with myself for having spent a pound in finery I shall never need to wear again, unless I want the Yorkshire folks to hoot and yell at me."

"But you enjoy dancing? Those small feet must look pretty flying over the floor."

She put out one, cased in a No. 3 cashmere boot, and laughed.

"It is not woefully misshapen, is it? But my feet cannot go without my body, and that cries 'enough' very early. I cannot dance long, because of a horrible pain that comes in my side, and my heart beats in my head. Of course you don't understand, and I cannot describe it any better, so will say no more about it."

I wondered whether this would account for the death-like pallor that overspread her face

at times, and her aversion to anything approaching excitement. Silently I proceeded to make tea, clinking the cups more than was necessary owing to the trembling condition of my hands.

But my faint attempt at a noise was drowned in a swelling roar of rage from Jowler, who started up, glaring at the doorway. At first I thought the animal was going mad, and I grew suddenly giddy and limp. He was merely fulfilling his duty of guardian, and what he intended to protect us against was a beggar. The figure of a man filled the doorway. He looked into the room with such an expression of familiar curiosity that I was for a second mute.

He was not ill-looking as far as features went, but all beauty of countenance was eclipsed by the rakish bearing and expression of repulsive insolence that pervaded the face. His was flashy poverty. The eyes were bloodshot, not sunken—denoting drink, not star-

vation. The worn-out boots had thin soles, and had come across the Channel. Hat and coat were alike cadish and greasy. This was no ordinary beggar, no farm labourer out of work. We stared at each other while I called off the dog, then I enquired—

"What do you want?"

"Anything—money, meat, or drink," came the reply, in the Cockney twang.

The answer astonished me, but not so much as Jocky's face, as she rose from the sofa with gleaming eyes and compressed lips. Before I could reply she reached the cake from the table and presented it to the man, saying—

"Take this, and go."

Amazement was pourtrayed on his face, and he half hesitated.

"Do you hear, sir?" reiterated the girl, stamping—"*go!*"

His head sank lower, and without a word he took the big cake and slunk out of the yard. I felt sorry.

"O, Jocky, you made him ashamed of his poverty, and it may not be his fault."

"Tut," replied she, turning her ghastly face to me. "He has his limbs and senses, why does he not crack stones on the road? Because he has no such honest intention; that's the sort of man to pocket one of your spoons while you are cutting him a piece of bread. 'Here, Jowler, after him; Jowler, hunt him away.'"

The beast bounded out of the yard, barking; the girl stood in the doorway with clenched hands. Presently Jowler returned, wagging his tail.

"He has gone?" asked Jocky, as the animal came up to her. "Thank you, old friend, thank you," said she, more fervently than I thought the occasion warranted.

CHAPTER VII.

SHORTLY before ten an incessant rumbling announced the arrival of the company. First one and then another had emerged from their apartments on their way to the drawing-room. Aunt and her two daughters had passed me, each radiant in her stately beauty and costly dress. Money and talent had been lavishly bestowed upon their toilets, and there was nothing to be desired. Eunice was rushing about in Indian muslin and pink ribbons, and repaid Mr. Thorne's attempt to kiss her with a stinging box on the ear. Her mother stopped and raised her eyebrows, the diamonds glistening on the rich velvet-like dewdrops.

"Eunice, you can remain with Penny; I dare not be responsible for your conduct."

"All right, mamma. You take Mr. Thorne, and I shall behave quite nicely, for no one else will be so rude as to kiss me without permission."

Charlotte glanced up at the child, balancing herself on the balustrade, with her ribbons and long legs flying behind, and shook her fan reprovingly.

"Is that all you are going to do?" called Eunice. "If you knew how nearly I shocked him in the garden to-day, I suspect you'd dig your nails into me.—Mr. Thorne," continued she, raising her voice, and leaning so far over that I caught her by the petticoats, "when next you want feeding, ask Charlotte."

"I say, Eunice," laughed Yorke, who had come up in time to hear this speech, catching her by the thick plait of hair, "stop that, or the mater will order you to bed. You have

little idea what squeamish ground you're stepping on. Has she, Penny ?"

I looked befittingly grave as I bade her be silent.

"Don't *you* be cross, Penny, darling!" cried she, throwing her arms round my neck, "and I'll tell you about it. This afternoon I was in the garden feasting on berries, and up came Mr. Thorne. He threw himself on to the grass, and asked me to feed him. I did for a bit, but he ate so many berries I got tired, and he couldn't be satisfied, so I thought I'd *make* him. The next time, instead of a berry, I dropped a big lump of soil into his mouth. O, you should have seen him splutter and cough; it was fine. I am only sorry now I did not put a snail in as well."

"I wonder when Jocky will be ready," said Yorke, after the laugh caused by Eunice's story was over.

"She's ready now," replied a voice behind us.

I did not know what Jocky was going to wear; she had only told me it was her mother's bridal dress, and as yellow as saffron.

"Will I do?" asked she, artlessly drawing nearer; "I am almost ashamed to go down, and a little bit shy too, for this is my first ball."

"Thank God!" said York, softly.

Whatever preparations Isabel and Charlotte had made for a conquest, there would not be one too many. They had need of all to vie with Joan Berdan. Her colourless face, with the large deep eyes, fascinated you strangely. The beautifully round, polished shoulders, the exquisite breast, the plump arms, fining into delicate wrists and hands, might have served a sculptor for a model. Her dress of white lace, perhaps, was yellow by daylight, but at night, relieved with sprays of rich ruby roses and leaves, it looked fresh enough. No jewellery had she on; one rose lay against the smooth hair, another nestled in her bosom.

The very arrangement of the flowers betokened no common taste. They had the appearance of having been blown on to the dress, and peeped from beneath the lace flounces in a deliciously natural style. Pleasant surprise made me silent, the effect was complete. A lady in the highest sense of the term, modestly self-possessed, supported by that quiet dignity which denotes, past all doubt, gentle birth. Of, according to opinion, ordinary appearance, but extraordinary talent, she assumed without effort a position of consequence and interest, of which it was useless to try and deprive her.

As I looked at her I felt that she would be the most observed and best remembered lady in the room that night.

Yorke's admiration was prudently confined to looks, and his passionate love was but ill concealed then.

Eunice expressed her opinion—

"Why, Jocky, you look ever so much

better than either Charlotte or Isabel, and you've dressed yourself. I am glad I am not 'out,' for no one would notice me if you were near."

The superb eyes rested on the child's face gravely for a moment, while she replied—

"Yes, they would, Eunice, for it is easily seen how little pleasure I take in society, and how very much better I like being left to myself. I am naturally unsociable, and my secluded life has nursed the failing to such an extent that I believe it will end in my hiding myself from humanity altogether."

"You can never do that, Jocky," said Yorke; "one will find you while he has sufficient life to direct his steps."

Her face hardened almost to ugliness, and her eyes flashed dangerously.

"I know that; I know fate has fettered me to what will embitter my life to its last hour, and my only hope of release is in the gate of Heaven. When it shuts, there will

be a separation—a judgment—and perhaps some recompense for a life of ceaseless terror and reproach."

She had misunderstood Yorke, but what could warrant such a speech? Eunice, fortunately, had gone in the direction of the ball-room, where the band of the regiment, by kind permission of Colonel Clavel, was enticing all to dance.

Jocky stood perilously near the edge of the top step. The passion had spent itself, and the lingering colour brightened her face to beauty.

"Isn't it the correct thing for some one to take me down, or am I to make a rush for it like everything else; get in with the crowd and be 'snubbed' by the mammas?"

Yorke offered his arm silently. She looked at him shrewdly for a second, then withdrew her hand.

"Take Penny, Mr. Sutherland. Courtesy, that is alone prompted by duty, is too graceless for me."

Before he could answer she darted down the stairs and disappeared. An oath burst from Yorke.

"Penelope, you are not a scatter-brain; tell me what freak of destiny has me now, that I love what I can neither command nor entice. What spirit of mischief possesses her that she tantalises me almost to frenzy?"

"You must overlook her faults, or release her. Her nature is independent, her resolutions rapidly taken and acted upon. She has forgotten you many a time before you have ceased speaking, and what frets you she never notices. Yorke—I must say it—be guarded, it is a dangerous thing to link your happiness to one so wild. Some one gentler would make you more contented."

"No. She is to me what none other can be; her perversity bewitches me, and the love-bits she gives me once in a way are sweeter than those of any other woman. As for gentleness, you little know how tender she can be

when she will. Penny, I fear it is I who do not understand her; I know she has a greater heart and brain than most people, and I am sensible that a superior hand is needed to guide her. If I could only assume command and composure, when she is by, she would heed me more. But I cannot, my presence of mind deserts me; I remember nothing but her, my love makes a baby of me."

I was sorry, but totally incapable of suggesting any remedy. It seemed to me a peculiar difficulty, in which no third person could help.

The ball-room presented a gay scene when we entered, small feet flew nimbly over the polished floor, and bright eyes vied with the lamps for supremacy. So much beauty and grace I had never beheld before; this was my first ball, and the remembrance of it flushes my cheeks now. Many a night had I imagined myself one of a similar assembly when shut up beneath the slates at Mrs. Sourlander's.

No one ever had a keener appreciation of enjoyment, or a greater relish for excitement. But my life passed so cheerlessly that despair stifled my spirits, and when I actually beheld what I had so often imagined, my heart beat with emotion to find myself unable to enjoy it.

Leaning on Yorke's arm, I soon forgot my own disappointment at my prematurely sobered condition, in searching for Jocky. A start given by Yorke told me he had discovered what I sought. She was very near, dancing with a big, red-headed man, who guided her supple figure as easily as a child's, and who, in my opinion, drooped his head unnecessarily till the waxed moustache touched her cheek.

More eyes than mine followed them as they flew round. They did not dance like the others. Noiselessly, swiftly, they passed and re-passed, changing their measure agreeably, and doing to perfection what army men call the "run out."

"Who is that with the lovely eyes the colonel is dancing with, Lacey?" asked one or two gentlemen standing by me; "he seems to be enjoying it."

"I don't know; I must ask for an introduction. She is not at all pretty, but she makes a fellow's heart go. Leave Clavel alone to find a good dancer, if there is one in the room. He rarely foots it, because he says English girls go round like posts. But that one might have had 'Celeste' for her mother."

"Come, Penny, let us go on," impatiently said Yorke, leading me through the rooms to the conservatory.

"Who is that man?" asked I, when we had taken up our station behind a patriarchal palm.

"Colonel Clavel, a notoriously bad man, though sought in society owing to his position. He is known to be the greatest flirt in these parts, and a non-marrying man."

"You are annoyed that Jocky is dancing with him?"

"Yes, I suppose I am, like a fool. And she looked so happy, too, in his d—d arms."

"Yorke, I forbid you to swear in my presence."

"I beg your pardon, Penny; but here is another inequality—I cannot dance any better than a bear. She would laugh at me, and refuse if I asked her."

"Then don't," replied I, fearing the consequences.

The momentary silence was broken by well-known tones.

"Stop here, please; this will do nicely."

"But you are in a draught."

"It will not harm me. How well your men play, Colonel Clavel."

"Yes, and how well you dance, Miss Berdan. You have lived abroad, of course?"

"Of course nothing of the kind. I have never been out of England. I cannot understand what makes people think that always."

"Do you know what my first impression

respecting you was—that you were an American, and I was not a little astonished to hear Albert call you 'cousin.' You are not like them."

"I know that; no more than the eagle is like the nightingale."

"Which do you liken yourself to, may I ask?"

"The eagle."

"Oh, I see; something to be wholly admired and half feared."

"Then why try to flatter me, for conceit is unassociated with barbarity?"

"I am not trying. I only tell you what I think of you. You could do the same by me if you chose."

"Certainly, but it would be the truth, and that is not always pleasant."

"You do not think I am adapted for admiration—in short, you do not admire me?"

"Not in the very least; I think you a very ugly man. Shall we rejoin the dancers?"

"No. I can dance any night I like, but I cannot talk to you. Come, now, what else do you think of me?"

"That I like you, though I have no notion what for."

"Do you think I am married?"

"No. The girl you would propose for must have money or beauty, and possessed of either she could command a better looking man than you."

"You hit hard. Do you know anything of my life, that you say this?"

"Nothing; but I can readily imagine there are many portions in it you would like to forget."

"Are you gifted with second sight?" asked the man, in slightly perturbed tones.

"No."

"Then why are you so unlike other women?"

"Because fate has used me worse, and—"

"And—allow me a moment, young lady—because your resemblance to the sex is your

only claim to the name of woman. You have a man's nerve and courage—indeed, few men have your precision and pluck. You have a strong will. Mind how you tax it; don't enlist this delicate body in too stiff an undertaking. Fate cannot always wear a stony countenance."

"Do you think not? Now hear me. She can please herself; so can every one else. What you mistake for courage is simply indifference; what you leniently call 'pluck' others term impudence. People seem to have their lives plentifully sprinkled with hopes and fears; I never had one in my life. I have no desire to appear better in one person's eyes than another's, and that gives me courage to say what I think. I neither dream dreams nor see visions. Life in its bare state, the one I am acquainted with, is an awful burden we cannot shake off. It consists of nothing but mortification and duty. Duty to your parents, your fellow-creatures, yourself. I

believe, when we have administered justice to others as we would have it administered to ourselves, when we have performed our numerous duties according to our conscience, we shall have had quite enough of—life."

"Your picture is not inviting; it cannot be drawn from experience! If so, I would ask, who has dared to contradict the intention of Providence? You are not suited for such an existence. You know what charms life—love. Surely you care for some one; you cannot have lived this long without being loved? You know what it is to love?"

"Perhaps, and we are told there is most anxiety where there is affection."

"No man would grieve you willingly. You should not foresee trouble; it may never come."

"Have I not told you fate has used me hardly? If I do not make a burthen for myself, some one else will lay theirs upon me. It is inevitable; all I can do is to fortify myself."

"You should let some man love you capable of protecting you."

"I have never been trained to love, and therefore find it awkward to do. You behold in me a person who has led a singularly loveless life, who was born hard, and whom circumstances have united to render still harder. But I must be insane to talk thus to you—a flirty, middle-aged man, who can have no more idea what I mean than that heath. Take me back to the dancers, and forget what I have said, at any rate do not repeat it."

"Never. Show me you trust me by speaking again."

"I think not. I have crushed the desire under my feet, and now I will dance, or talk upon any subject you like as properly as if aunt were behind."

"I don't care to hear you, you have spoken out of such a fascinating book already that I prefer silence to any other. But I will take you back, or people will say we are making love."

"Will they?"

"You think that impossible?"

"Quite."

A sigh reached my ear as they rose.

"What would you like to dance, Miss Berdan? May I see your card?"

"Can your men play any Russian music?"

"Yes."

"Then I should like a Russian polka; I can manage just one more, and my remaining efforts shall go in the maddening swing that Russians love."

"How do you know their style?"

"I had a Polish schoolfellow, and she taught me, but I have not met with any one else who could dance so."

"I can, happily. I lived in Moscow two years, and—*loved* there."

"Why did you not marry the lady?"

"Because she was married, and refused to run away with me. You are shocked?"

"Not at all; I am only astonished that you could offer the woman you *loved* such an insult."

"What else could I do? Wouldn't you have done it?"

"No; for had she agreed I should have been haunted by the dread that she would in turn leave *me*."

"But supposing we had been supremely happy, that she had found me all she desired, would not that have been sufficient to ensure loyalty?"

"No; she would still have been minus the identical thing that made her follow you—principle."

His reply I could not hear; they were gone. I had listened in a state of astonishment and admiration, not devoid of *fear*. How could she so speak to a stranger? Yet every word had borne the stamp of purity, and showed unmistakably how far above suspicion were her thoughts. If she did not win love, she would respect; no man could in thought wrong her, much less in word.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THERE," ejaculated Yorke, "she has captured Clavel. Can you deny now that she bewitches men? She rides roughshod over us, and we are powerless to stop it. I suppose she has forgotten our engagement."

"Because she spoke so to the colonel? Nothing of the kind; that is her natural manner. She cannot help it; she is doing the work allotted to her. She is an apostle of a new order. It is considered a glorious thing to turn missionary and preach the Gospel to the heathen, but there is a Paganism beneath a satin vest, a poison to which 'parsons' are not the antidote, and which requires tact to

reach. The one who can make a conscience and heart respond will not have wasted time."

"Then you think she has an object in view?"

"Certainly. Look at her; does she look objectless? Is not her manner full of purpose? I believe every word she utters is freighted with a meaning to be understood later. She will dance with that man, and she will say something crude, cutting, that will blister his memory for many a day. Her sharp tongue will pierce through the crust of sinful years, and the first seed of repentance will be sown by her. Jocky is no saint, but her efforts are holy, and her work as efficacious as that of the plough before the sower."

I believed what I said. Our quieter conversations had shown me how splendidly balanced were her principles. She marched along the narrow path in her own strange, independent manner, and if she exercised her power to induce others to follow her, I

thought her little band—though gathered in ball-rooms and other odd places—would be as well received as that of any acknowledged disciple.

Yorke murmured—

"Can it do good; does she help?"

"Undoubtedly. She has helped me; she is bound to aid every one to whom she can impart one grain of her marvellous courage, her foresight; and the novelty of the process charms them to listen till she has shot the bolt home. I doubt if many know what has happened to them till a re-occurrence of the failing jars on their conscience."

We returned to the ball-room. Much of the insipidity had deserted it, a weak excitement seemed diffused amongst the company. The wild strains of a strange music tickled every ear. The old bandmaster's head shook as he beat time, and new couples hastened to join the dancers.

But only two could manage the maddening

rush, the peculiar long swinging step wanted for the Russian polka. They danced the others out of conceit with themselves, and soon only a few remained to share the honours with the two who flew so deftly to the music. A murmur of admiration echoed through the room, and my pulse bounded with something of the old rapture. She danced beautifully, almost as if the wind guided her and bent her to its will. There was in the rapid movement a wild grace, entrancing and irresistible. They passed close to where I stood—Yorke had been captured by his mother to pay court to some swan-necked beauty—and I fancied, as Jockey's eyes met mine, they looked painful, and the mouth compressed. They were coming round again, and she spoke to her partner. The colonel glanced at the face on his shoulder, quickly guided her to my window, and screened her behind the curtain. He was only in time to prevent the assembly from seeing Miss Berdan almost unconscious, stiff,

and white, in his arms. His breast heaved perceptibly as, supporting her with one arm, he pushed the window wider open with the other.

The great eyes looked at us intelligently, but the plunging heart stopped all utterance. I remembered what she had told me of the "horrible pain."

"She is subject to this, Colonel Clavel; don't move her; it will subside in time. You will be better soon, Jocky?"

The blueish lips formed "yes," and we waited. I held the curtains together so that no one should enter the alcove. The dancers swept past on one side, and we listened to the poor frightened heart, struggling to beat tranquilly again on the other.

The man bent over her, with eyes full of tears.

"Poor little thing! poor little thing!"

She smiled at him, and moved her head.

"Can I get you anything?" asked he.

"No."

I was relieved to hear her speak. Had it not been for her own composed manner, I should have been alarmed. But her eyes expressed no fear, so I judged she had a more intimate acquaintance with these attacks than was supposed. I saw that no experience, no skill, could turn aside the purpose of the hidden disease. Some day—when God willed it—that brave heart would be suddenly stilled for ever.

Her voice was low when she spoke.

"I am better now, I can walk. I have troubled you to hold me ever so long, Colonel Clavel, but there was no alternative, unfortunately."

"Don't say so; these past moments will be amongst the hallowed of my misspent life. But you should not provoke these attacks, Miss Berdan."

"I do not generally, and my natural calmness helps me. I did wrong to dance, I know. Never mind; don't look so grave, and don't

tell any one of my stricken condition. My life is likely to last as long as I desire it, and it is cowardly to live in dread of what will overtake us all, whether diseased or not."

The colonel evidently thought if the words were strong the author of them was not, for he held her like a baby on his arm, and lifted her on to the terrace, saying—

"It is better than facing those people."

"Ever so much; and now, sir, please go. Penny will come with me. Believe me, I am grateful to you."

She held out her pretty hands to him, and he grasped them, bending his head reverently. The action was that of a courtier, but fashion did not prompt it. It was done to hide his face, which had more emotion and earnestness in it than it was good she should see.

"You are only wishing me 'good night,' not 'farewell.'"

"Both, Colonel Clavel; it is unlikely we shall meet again."

"It only needs some one's will to make it likely; I will exert mine. I shall come and see you; I will send you an invitation to our ball, but—I will *not* dance with you."

"No, for I shall not go to your ball, thanks all the same. In the first place, I have no dress, and no money to get one, and in the second, I am no ball-going young person. This is my first and my last; to convert myself into a spinning-top is not my intention."

"What is your intention?"

He held her hands firmly. The curtain lifted, and Yorke stepped out. Jocky's ready tongue deserted her; she stood silent and nervous under the colonel's gaze. Was anything ever so unlucky!

"Allow me to relieve you of the care of my cousin, Colonel Clavel!"

The two men glared at each other; the colonel defiantly crushed the hands on to his breast, and, looking into the white face, replied—

"Only too pleasant a care, Sutherland. I think cousinship was invented to tantalise others, but"—bending his head till it touched her face, he whispered—"there is a nearer and dearer tie."

He bowed, and left us.

Had Yorke heard him? Almost roughly he drew Jocky's hand through his arm, his face flushed and angry.

"Is this your notion of honour, Jocky?"

"Yes," retorted she, half stupidly.

"Then mine will not agree with it."

"I know that. I may remind you that this is not our only dissimilarity; also, that I don't choose to have my judgment, on any subject, questioned."

They were walking on, I following, in a fever. I detected in Jocky's composure the lull before a storm. The music sounded distinctly through the open windows, and shadows flitted on the grass as the dancers passed. It was hot to sickliness, and the

moonlight frosted the foliage on Jocky's dress, forming a curious contrast by the side of the deep-coloured roses. They turned the corner by the plantation, and entered the courtyard. I fancied Yorke sought the housekeeper's room, but Jocky determinedly pulled the other way, and we came to a stand by the well. Jowler came up and whined. There were no lights in this part of the house, it was deserted. All the maids were busy in the quarter of the festivities, and a forcible dejection was apparent.

I would have made my retreat, but the strange instinct which caused Jocky to define most people's intentions, enabled her to know mine. She drew her hand from Yorke's arm and placed it on mine.

"Why remove your hand?"

"I can stand alone."

"It did not seem as if you could five minutes ago. I think Colonel Clavel had both your hands clasped on his breast?"

"He had."

Her calmness aggravated him.

"And do you consider that becoming?"

"Quite."

"Jocky, you are either very hardened or inexperienced."

"Very likely I am both, and I am proud to be the latter, for it renders me exempt from prudish notions. You must judge others by yourself, Yorke Sutherland, since an innocent action suggests to you the occasion for censure. I have mixed little in society, and may be pardoned if I forget that the prevalence of vice has fostered a disbelief in virtue. But my simple life has not deadened my senses past the rejection of an insult. I will not allow the meaning your insinuation conveys; I repudiate it totally. It is a creation of your own ill-conditioned mind, sir."

He stared, and persisted.

"You cannot justify your conduct; you cannot make it appear the action of an engaged lady, or a disengaged one."

"Lady!" sneered she; "I am no lady, I am

only a person. My speech has not been smoothed by the customs of genteel society, or my faculties paralysed by the importance of my ancestors. I represent no one but myself; I can defend myself, if needs be. Did I feel disposed, I could give ample excuse for my conduct. It was permissible, nay, unavoidable under the circumstances."

"Explain yourself."

"No; that tone smacks too much of command. I never obey an *order*. Moreover, you are so ready to surmise on your own account that an explanation would be waste of time on my part. What I have to tell would find no resting-place in your belief, since your strongest feeling is distrust."

"You forget I have the right."

"Not yet, thank Heaven; not yet. I am still free, accountable to no living creature for word or action, and free I will stay."

Her voice had in it such a ring of exaltation as she proclaimed her liberty; her laugh

sounded so elfishly defiant that I clasped her hand fearfully. It was horribly cold. An expression of hardness that robbed her of youth had come into her face, and she seemed ready to attack anything that provoked her further. The devil was up, not the vulgar bluster people call temper, but a terribly icy monster, freezing all it approached. This she chained with her will, and with it fenced herself off from all attempts at reconciliation made by the offending party. Rapidly she was retiring behind this wall of ice—once there, we could not intrude, and she would not come out. We should lose her, not in body, but in spirit. That sweet wild thing that transformed her by its beauty and endeared her to others would hie away and give birth to thoughts in her brain that we should never hear. We should be shut out from those rare flashes of pathos and satire that sharpened the dullest intellects to admire and love the girl, who had power to

hold in bondage whom she chose, without an effort.

I had been silent, but now I must speak. If I would avert the misery caused by a misunderstanding, now was the time. I disengaged my hand, and grasped Yorke not very gently.

"Are you mad? Is this your idea of wooing? Are you not scaring her you told me you could die to win?"

"Am I to be made ridiculous in the eyes of all those fellows? Will not Clavel repeat this night's foolery, think you, when our engagement is announced? Is it too much to ask an explanation of such conduct as I witnessed? She has danced and talked to him ever since she entered the ball-room, and people are already speaking of it."

"Let them, but don't you, if——"

"Silence, Penny!" commanded Jocky; "say no more. Go and ask an explanation from Colonel Clavel, and if he does not lay

his horsewhip about your shoulders, you'll not get what you deserve. Go now, this moment; I shall stand here till you return."

It was useless attempting to gainsay her; the most reasonable course now was to end the scene by asking Colonel Clavel for an explanation.

"Go in," entreated Yorke, evidently sorry for what had happened, "you will catch cold standing here."

"No; indignation will keep me warm. You need not be any longer than you can help."

She turned from him as though they were nothing to each other, or ever had been. We waited in silence, sometimes a sigh breaking from her, but no word.

They came—Yorke and the colonel—the one wroth, the other contrite—and she bent her head to their respective speeches of sympathy and regret, and then walked away.

I found her in her room long after, still arrayed in ball costume.

"How did they end it?"

"I do not know; I did not stay to hear. You will forget it, Jocky?"

"I ought not, if I could. I knew things were too fair to last; I distrust any show of happiness that dawns for me; and then, when *that* came, I might have guessed what would follow. I was a fool to try—love is not for such as I; there must be, there *is* a wider field for such natures as mine to fight in. Surely my life is worth something, why should I let it batter itself out against the miseries others pass their time in making? Why need I fear—are we not to use the means given us, providing it does not peril our own honour, or another's life? This is a warning, Penny, a reminder that my present and future is to be like my past—a life of doubts and difficulties. Can it be wondered at if I say I am *afraid;* yes, afraid of a new bondage, into which old terrors will creep?"

She had kept her back to me while speak-

ing, hurrying as though she feared I should interrupt her.

"Am I to understand you will give Yorke up?"

"Certainly, I have already done so; and the most decent thing I can do now is to go home. Penny, will you come with me?"

"Yes, if aunt will spare me."

She turned; something like the old light was in her face again, and I thought how Yorke would miss her, how such a face would haunt a man who had once kissed it.

"Go to bed."

"Presently, when I am tired of listening to the breeze making music in the oats yonder. Penny, how can you stay here? Everything, everybody is so insipidly precise; I am half stifled. Do you know what I should like to do? Run out and lie down in the clover, and let the cricket sing me to sleep. I suppose they are dancing still in that hot room, and know nothing of the night, or our faint

tragedy by the well? Keep me from the snares of fashion; give me always courage to stand to my opinion; let my love of solitude prevail, for I believe there are few good thoughts in a room full of people, bent upon pleasure. All is heat, excitement, and vexation. It is a terrible waste of time, a great temptation to the 'sentinel' to call us to duty, and show us how the sands of our life are running out while we dance to please the devil."

"Jocky, go to bed, and don't trouble about others."

"I dare say; I cannot make my brain go to bed if I do my body. It will go on thinking its thoughts out. I wish I only saw what people want one to see, and not what they strive zealously to hide. It makes me cautious and impatient with those who cannot master their follies. How truly patient God must be, for He knows everything."

She was silent, a sad expression on her face,

so pale and full of gentleness, it touched my heart. It seemed to plead mutely, to be seeking earnestly for power to pass known dangers.

"Penny, will you pray for me? Say what you choose, it cannot come amiss, I need so much."

What a strange ending to a ball, to be asked by the belle of it to pray for her!

CHAPTER IX.

THE day after the ball had a disjointed feeling, for a great piece had been cut out of it. The morning's light found the musicians playing, the company dancing.

At luncheon there was a mixed assembly, aunt and her daughters becomingly languid, Eunice cross, and Jocky pre-occupied. I had a bad headache. I was sleeping on the sofa in the housekeeper's room; Jocky had settled herself in the chair. I dreamt. A strange dream of two women—young and old—who disagreed about the ownership of a man. I awoke to find it was no dream, but reality, that had crept into my slumbers. I sat up.

"I can only say I disapprove; had I been asked earlier I should have said the same thing. I have other views for my son. Yorke, you have grievously disappointed me."

Aunt's face was flushed, her taper fingers trembled as she united them.

"Mother, when I tell you my happiness is at stake, surely you will relent!"

"Don't trouble your mother farther. If she does consent, I won't. Aunt, I shall not marry your son; take heart, you can pick him a wife out of the aristocracy; I am going home."

There was an amused expression on her face, the eyes laughed.

"I am astonished you have mentioned our foolish engagement to your mother, Yorke. I never expected to hear anything more of the matter after last night. I conclude, however, that Colonel Clavel's explanation was satisfactory, and consequently I am to be 'taken on again.' Thanks very much, but I prefer a

new engagement, if any; no one has yet taught me how to repair my confidence."

"You feel it shaken?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Jocky, you will be sorry some day."

"I think not."

It was said very coolly, without the least trace of the emotion visible in him. There was a weariness, an indifference about her that contrasted oddly enough with the apparent vexation and interest of the haughty woman who "disapproved." Certainly the young one had found something in life that the old one had missed. The lonely life of the girl on the Yorkshire Moors had been minus the gilded baubles of fashion, and she had thought and reasoned deeply, till the inevitable disappointments in life had lost their sting.

"When are you going?" enquired aunt.

"Soon; to-morrow. But I want you to spare Penny to go with me."

"I shall be happy to give Penelope a holiday, and still happier to welcome her back when she feels disposed to resume her duties."

There was a pause, long and trying. Aunt broke it.

"Yorke, I should like you to go to the bank for me?"

"Now, to-day?"

"Yes."

Her eyes did not meet his; she knew it was only an excuse to get him out of the house, and so prevent any possibility of a reconciliation between him and Jocky.

"I shall go and pack, Penny."

Jocky left the room; Yorke followed.

Now aunt's annoyance was unchecked. She paced the room with a long stagy sweep; there was a good deal of what is termed theatrical in Aunt Sutherland. It might only be the result of long study as to grace and carriage. I never knew that any of our people had stood behind the footlights. The

feather in her cap waved as she swayed her head in communion with herself. She swept over the flags, ignoring the carpet, gathering the dust from out the corners in her passage. I sat on the old sofa, amused. She looked my way.

"Penelope, you are laughing?"

"Certainly not, madam."

I knew my face was straight; in my soul I was convulsed.

"Is not this enough to try *any one?*" inquired she, stopping in her march.

"It is over now; all you have to do is to forget it."

"Over! Well, perhaps it is; but had I not a presentiment of this?"

"Then why did you not prevent it? I wonder whether you will have a presentiment the next time Yorke falls in love?"

"The next time?"

"Yes. You cannot suppose this is to be the last? When it does come you may look

for a change; the next girl won't accede to your wishes so readily. You will find you cannot be more than a mother to your son, and he will desire a wife."

"Penelope, I *have* a wife in view for Yorke. It is my last desire to see any of my children single, but I expect them to marry their equal, not their inferior. There is a marked difference between my son and Miss Berdan."

"True, there is; a difference that only a noble nature like Jocky's, that only such pure love as hers, could bridge over. You have erred, aunt. It remains for you now to find his equal—you have lost his superior."

She replied scornfully, wondered what infatuation there was about the girl, and sailed majestically out of the room. Their engagement had directly crossed her plans for Yorke's marriage; she was angry, and in no mood to be just.

The ball formed the subject of conversation, and any peculiarity in my manner or Jocky's

passed unnoticed. When it was known we were going, astonishment was expressed, and Charlotte and Isabel were "so sorry." Mr. Thorne endeavoured to speak to Jocky, which she observed and frustrated. Yorke was absent.

The morning was bright, and we started early. Aunt parted most amicably from Jocky—her manner was perfection, and no one guessed the circumstances of their parting. She gave me up with the utmost readiness, never considering what was to become of Eunice. I think she would have given her jewelled fan to have got rid of Jocky. I never thought her a fool before; I did now, to suppose that the length of England would make any difference in Yorke's love.

"So endeth my visit to my relations. I have been politely expelled because my cousin made love to me," said Jocky, as the train carried us to London.

"How will it end?"

"I don't know, Penny; my prophetic possession is not upon me at present. Like most of its kind, no doubt, in a few months, there will only be a 'memory.'"

"And the colonel?"

"O, Clavel? Yes, to be sure; *he* would have been a brand to have plucked from the fire. I like him."

Her face wore a business-like aspect; there was not an atom of the forsaken about her. Did she, or did she not, love Yorke?

We travelled on under the burning sun, scorched by its rays, for second-class carriages were curtainless. It was still hot and dark that summer's night when we reached the country station. I was faint and sick. This far North was a grand place, but a wearisome one to reach.

There were a few late people, who had been to a fair, jostling each other, and reeling dangerously near the line. They had to be piloted through the gate before we could be

attended to. The stationmaster rushed up and swung his lantern in our faces.

"Why, it's Miss Berdan; if I had only a known as it was you, I would not have kep' you a-waiting, marm."

"Never mind, Norris, I am sure those people needed looking after."

"Right you are, marm. John, come on here; shoulder this 'ere luggage for these ladies. If I might be so bold, miss, how is you and it to be got to 'Crag House'?"

"In the fly."

"That carn't be, the trap's broke down and gone to Ripon to be mended, but I dare say old Mitchford would take you in his donkey cart."

"What an entrancing offer, Penny! What are we to do?"

"Go in the donkey cart as quickly as possible."

"In due time we did go in the donkey cart, with our two boxes behind, and old Mitchford

walking by the animal to prod it frequently. We sat upon our shawls, in the bottom of the cart.

"How far is it to 'Crag House'?" asked I, when I was to some extent accustomed to the jolting.

Jocky was sitting clasping her knees, staring over the country.

"Six miles."

Horror hushed me, and I resolved not to think of the place till I saw it. We were passing over a common, alone in the wild beauty of the Moorland. The blooming heather, fragrant and high, formed hedges to the moor, huge blocks of granite rose hard and mighty out of the plane, grim landmarks. Hot and still was the night, disturbed alone by the plover's whistle. No house was visible, little evidence of man; the road we followed was a cattle track. A gentle breeze came sighing softly over the still, warm heather. It sprang from the hills that rose so

grandly under the moonlight. A low laugh from Jocky shattered my meditations; her white teeth were glistening.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing; I was only thinking what aunt and her daughters would say if they could see us now, journeying, at nearly midnight, in a donkey cart, over the Moors. They are kissing each other's lily cheeks, and respectable Drysdale is locking up the silver. The house is retiring to repose in its aristocratic formality. I say, 'Peace be with them.'"

I followed this train of thought, and soon found myself deep in speculation as to the result of aunt's social plans. The recollection of various absurdities I had seen and heard since I became an inmate of Ringly Royal tickled my fancy, and I—the poor Scotch girl—laughed at my stately relatives.

We were nearing a hamlet, when I next observed things in the present—a straggling

village, with stone roofs and walls. Ugly, cold erections, with wretched gardens, and the moors at their backs. We were ascending a hill, the church stood at the foot, built of grey stone, like the houses. Some dogs howled, and we crawled on. The hill mounted, we swerved suddenly to the right, and there, sheltered behind a block of stone, stood "Crag House." It was on the moor, seen as far as the eye could reach, for miles and miles. A long, low, grey stone house, with a great orchard and outbuildings behind, a shrubbery in front, divided from the moor by a low wall. It was a quaint, bare, miserable-looking place, the wind had stunted the trees where it had not killed them.

I was tired with the journey, and consequently apt to feel nervous and sad. I almost wished to go back in the donkey cart, when I saw it move away. We stood on the step by our boxes.

Jocky knocked, the echo alone answered

us. Then a sniff and whine proceeded from under the door.

"Will, old fellow, go, wake them," called Jocky. "I am glad they have the dog in the house at nights; I half suspected they would turn him out when I was gone, but no doubt they were afraid."

Will now added his efforts to ours; we kept attending to the knocker assiduously. Still they slumbered.

"There is nothing for it but to throw stones at mother's window."

Stooping, she filled her hand with gravel from the path and flung it at a window to the left. Like hail they showered upon the glass. This had to be repeated several times before the blind was pulled aside, and a responsive tap was given.

"There," ejaculated Jocky, "we are to be let in, and shan't I catch it?"

Now commenced a series of noises, which gradually swelled into a conversation, held,

probably, on the stairs, the parties advancing and retiring in the most aggravating manner, as if they pulled each other back by the petticoats.

"Mrs. Snozle, do mind what you are doing with that candle, the tallow is dropping all over the floor."

"Never heed, it will scrape off. My dear Mrs. Berdan, you are surely not going to open the door without being certain it is Miss Berdan? Nanny, here, Nanny, your mistress is going to unbar the door and let in Heaven knows what—robbers, perhaps. Goodness knows what will happen to us!"

"You need not fear; no one will ever do much to you, Mrs. Snozle, unless they cut your tongue out first."

Here followed a scuffle, in which some one trod upon some part of the dog, eliciting savage howls from him.

"Nanny, you are most disrespectful," came in irritable tones from behind.

"You can tell me that in the morning, and give me notice for about the ninetieth time, if you like. Let me open the door for Miss Jocky now."

"But are you sure it is Miss Jocky?" screamed Mrs. Snozle.

A snarl was the enraged Nanny's answer, as she commenced to unfasten the door.

"Penny," whispered Jocky bitterly, "I forgot to tell you, there is one game always being played in this house—keep your temper."

The door opened.

Nanny—a muscular woman, with red cheeks and massive jaw—held the candle high, enabling me to see along a wide, flagged passage, and half way up the stairs two females in demi-toilette.

"I hope you won't think it any doings of mine, Miss Jocky, that you was kept knocking at the door like a beggar!" said this poor body, with a face as white as if she had seen a ghost.

"That's Miss Sutherland, Nanny."

"Oh, Miss Sutherland, I'll mind your name if I can."

The ladies advanced in a state of frenzied annoyance. Mrs. Berdan's face was fine, the features beautifully cut, but of that weak expression which is only sweet when pleased. Her nightcap, exquisitely worked, ribbon-run beneath, and several rows of delicately goffered lace clipped the pretty face closely, showing its undeniable beauty.

Mrs. Snozle was little, fat, and possessed of a pair of the wildest eyes, and a discordant voice. She rushed at Jocky, kissed her, chattered and cried, all at once. The confusion was amazing, considering the limits of the party. Jocky kissed her mother quietly, respectfully, not rapturously. Mrs. Berdan shook my hand; her's was burning. Mrs. Snozle spluttered in my face.

"How is it you are so late, Joan? I hope the Thomas's did not see you?" said Mrs. Berdan.

"I think not, mother."

"I am glad of that; it is a disgraceful hour. You have cracked my window, Joan, and must pay for it."

"I will, mother."

"It is a mercy the stone did not come through and hit me; it would have blinded me."

"I thought you said it had not come through?"

"No, it has not, but I say it might."

A sigh escaped Jocky, which seemed more weariness of spirit than body, though she was helping Nanny with the boxes.

"I don't know what you are to have for supper; there is nothing cooked. I told Nanny to boil the ham, and she would not. I can get nothing done; I am more tried than any one," whined Mrs. Berdan.

Nanny grunted.

"Mother, go to bed; we shall manage."

"You are not to take the cold fowl, Joan. Nanny, you will not give them it; it is for to-morrow."

No reply from Nanny.

"Did you hear what I said?" reiterated Mrs. Berdan.

"Yes, I heard," replied the woman disrespectfully.

Jocky's face flushed.

In high wrath Mrs. Berdan departed, declaring to herself that she would "let the house and go into lodgings." I did not fancy any one would be found to take either.

"Come along, Miss Berdan. I *did* boil the ham, though I was not going to tell *her* so. I am right glad you're back, but I don't know what you've come for, unless it's to have the flesh worried off your bones."

She had lighted us into the dining-room—a comfortable apartment of moderate size. A sofa, drawn close to the fireplace, with a hole in it from constant pressure, showed where Mrs. Berdan spent most of her time. A bag hung on to the bell, showed how she employed it. It contained a ball of scarlet fingering wool, and a strip of dragged, fretted

knitting—an outward demonstration of much inward chafing. The room smelt of toddy. Jocky opened the window; I sat down by it. Presently she roused me, by saying—

"Penny, listen to this; this is how Mrs. Snozle writes mother's letters for her—'Mrs. Berdan begs to inform Mr. Grant please send a man first thing to-morrow as the oven is quite useless, some bricks fell down this morning and nearly set the House on fire but for salt thrown on the sky-light, broken by some person from the outside and the wind and the rain come in awful, which ought to be attended to as it will injure the premises.'"

We laughed at the breathless letter, written precisely as Mrs. Snozle gabbled.

"I should like to stop this, but I dare not; mother will make such a fuss if I interfere. But some one ought; things are getting worse; presently we shall be the laughing-stock of the place, with my poor mother's vagaries. Penny, I may as well tell you now

that I and my mother are not on the terms we should be. You will notice the cause of our dissimilarity many times daily. Our principles are unlike; our opinions differ even on household matters. In such affairs I give way, and things are always in a muddle, as you will see. I put a patch on when the breach gets intolerable, and so we hold together. The one servant, insolent because she considers there is little call for respect, bad-tempered through repeated fault-finding, is constantly in a state of mutiny. My pride is stung every day; my patience too tired to exercise. I have said I give in when the point is unimportant, and I do, but I do not when it is of consequence, and never shall. I must do what I consider right while I have power to reflect, if others won't, and so, I suppose, the struggle will last while we live. Were we husband and wife, law would help us, but being mother and daughter, it will have nothing to do with us. To break the tie

by my own act, I am averse. It would not agree with my idea of duty. So I stay to be little loved, and much insulted; to exert my authority from time to time, to avert a calamity, and to have my disbelief in happiness and justice strengthened hourly."

I understood; it was this unsociable home-life, coupled with Jocky's hard nature and vigorous brain, that had placed her above the frivolities usually associated with youth, and developed her independence till she had become at times cynical and unimpressionable. Others might say her character was too masculine for a lady, that she was too merciless for a woman. I can only believe that few females could have supported the burthen she did without giving way under it, that it was extraordinary tact which enabled her to guide that mutinous household. Her self-denial was practised, not theorised, and her feelings, if invisible to most people, were none the less acute. Her life had been hard from the commencement.

When a baby, she had been consigned to the care of a soldier's widow, and brought up by her. This woman had discharged her duty faithfully, and reared the little creature methodically. Rule was the centre of Jocky's existence. Her mother had allowed the nurse full charge, and the child had imbibed an affection for the being who tended her that was unusual. Her nature cannot be said to have been tampered with—a spoon and the teapot having suckled her—but, possibly, many of her early impressions were founded upon the manners of her attendant, who was a very composed and collected woman.

Nanny entered with the tray, and we did ample justice to the fare. My sleep was profound after the fatigue, and the bright beams of the sun awoke me. Jocky slept lightly, pale and sadder in her sleep than I cared to see her, as if a prohibited thought had trespassed on her memory in an unguarded moment.

CHAPTER X.

THE life at "Crag House" was uneventful, the only variety being temper. Of this there was enough and to spare. Jocky's plan was to go out on the moors as much as possible, and when in, to occupy her time healthily. We paid the hamlet one visit daily, to the post. It contained several shops of moderate pretensions. Some few families lived there, whose acquaintance the Berdans had.

Mrs. Thomas, the mother of two grown-up daughters, being an early friend of Mrs. Berdan's, the Misses Thomas were held up as examples of amiability, beauty, and affection to Jocky. Mrs. Berdan never wearied

of proclaiming the qualities and virtues of these elderly spinsters. They gave parties, feasts of sweet cake and negus. To their entertainments Jocky was always invited, and obliged to go. The company was very select, very improving.

I asked Jocky if she thought there was any chance of their giving a party then?

"Yes, this is just about the time. The early chickens will be ready to assume the duties of the poultry-house, and the deposed rooster will be slowly cooked and set before the guests. Depend upon it we shall have a party of a somewhat substantial order, and it will be almost as much trouble to me as to them. They always borrow things innumerable, which I have to climb to the top of the store closet for. Every one feels marvellously at home there, for they are certain to eat or drink out of something belonging to themselves. Miss Thomas will play 'A fragment,' Miss Mary will sing 'The Woodpecker

Tapping.' Then every one who can make a noise will have the greatest pleasure in doing it. I have known them—dance!"

I wondered how Jocky managed to pull through it. Mrs. Berdan was dosing, Jocky writing, I mending, when Mrs. Snozle dashed in, her shawl flying over her shoulders, her bonnet on the back of her head.

"Mrs. Berdan, my *dear* Mrs. Berdan, what do you think? The Thomases are going to have a ball!"

Mrs. Berdan struggles into an upright position.

"Mr. Thomas had a fall? Dear, dear, it is—"

"Ball!" screamed Mrs. Snozle.

"What?" retorted Mrs. Berdan, pushing back her cap at one side, and pulling the wool out of her ears with alacrity, "what do you say?"

Mrs. Snozle repeated it, quite red in the face from the exertion.

"Ball! is that all? They must be mad; and I'll trouble you not to wake me again, Mrs. Snozle. Dr. Plaster says every natural sleep is worth a year's life, and I was sleeping then like a baby."

"Try again, mother," said Jocky, wishing to mollify her.

"No use," replied the old lady, with the air of a martyr; "I can never catch my sleep; I am not like you, off in a moment."

Jocky made no reply; I smiled. Mrs. Snozle was correct—the Thomases were going to have a ball, and we were invited.

"Joan," said Mrs. Berdan, "I hope you will dress yourself nicely!"

"I will do my best, mother."

I felt alarmed, my muslin must be livened up.

"Don't trouble to touch it, Penny; it will do beautifully. Wait till you see the toilets."

I did wait, and thankful I was I had saved my pence. The night was cold and misty; we made the journey in shawls and goloshes.

We were shown upstairs. Virgins were disrobing, and exposing their bare yellow shoulders. They looked at Jocky, and scowled. Where were their charms now, beside that white bosom and arms, over which the black net was drawn so protectingly?

Miss Mary swooped down upon us like a vulture, violently red, brick red, in a copper-coloured silk, and Roman ribbons and sash. Miss Heavybod could not come—awful pause! in which I supposed it to be the musician, or town cook. After all, it was only a Manchester schoolmistress. I revived. The company were assembled in the drawing-room. Their vanguard was led by an antiquated virgin, in black velvet and Irish diamonds. Her head was prodigious, with coils of hair and plumes of feathers. Her arms were bare to the top, and manacled. Her fan possessed a looking-glass, its owner a good appetite. She did not speak, yet every one in the room knew she was that wonderful woman, Miss

Rosaline Charmer, aged 66, and that she had arrived in her yellow chariot, drawn by her broken-winded horses.

She spoke to no one, not even to young Mr. Thomas, when he came and dragged her to the refreshment-room. He spoke, she bowed her head, the plumes waved, they departed. The ladies were drawn up in their war paint on the couches; the gentlemen made a dismal crowd behind the door. Mr. Thomas essayed to collect his army; we were paired off.

Jocky fell to the lot of a man with a pot-house air; I was assigned to a young Quaker. More gentlemen were coming—they would arrive by the next train. I concluded it must be a cattle one. We neared the ball-room; there was a sickening smell of oil, and a terrible noise.

A man, more like a smith than a musician, had been hired to hammer the cracked spinet through the floor. Its cries of resistance rent the air; bad scent and tainted breaths pol-

luted it. They danced—that is, they heaved, cannonaded, jumped, and panted. I forgot Jocky, I was so much occupied protecting my features, and watching a young lady who resided with her aunt. She had come in that venerable relative's back comb, and was prancing to herself in a corner with her face to the wall.

"Not on any account, I thank you. Do, pray, leave me."

It was Jocky, flushed and indignant.

"Beast!" continued she, addressing me; "his knowledge of dancing has been acquired in a casino. Heavens, how he held me, and his hands are like frogs."

"This is your spiritual party; obviously the stock is kept bottled. He is not like the gallant colonel, Jocky?"

"Clavel? No; he can dance and knows how to hold a lady. I almost wish he were here, only I should be ashamed. He would chuck that fellow through the window. I

shall dance no more, let us go back to the Court of the Queen of Sheba."

We went, and there we stayed till a decent hour of departure arrived. Then we hooded and shawled ourselves, and groped our way home, tired and disgusted, and hoping it might not enter the benevolent heart of Mrs. Thomas to give another ball.

The longer I stayed, the more I wondered how Jocky existed at home. I am not wishful to depict faults too graphically, especially when they belong to the departed. I shall therefore only say that Mrs. Berdan was most peculiar, frequently amusing, and always irritating. When she was not sleeping, she was complaining, and every available moment was given to reproving somebody. She foresaw, poor creature, in every misadventure, however trifling, a calamity. Her imaginary troubles were enormous. Real ones she had, but when her daughter courageously offered her a release from them, in which process she

took all trouble, Mrs. Berdan censured her and reviled her proposals. Still there was the cry for help, still the determination not to be extricated. It was intensely aggravating. Her ailments and manner of contracting them were extraordinary. On one occasion she informed us that "the velvet having been removed from her bonnet, she had taken cold in the crown of her head."

Mrs. Snozle was a truly marvellous woman, of eighty years old, but, by the aid of false teeth and dyed hair, she defied any one to arrive at such a conclusion. Hysterical on the slightest provocation, it needed but a disturbance of Mrs. Berdan's contrivance to set her companion screaming. On these occasions, Jocky's sternness was the only antidote. She would walk up to the yelling little old creature, and, fixing her eyes on the distorted countenance, speak firmly but kindly to her. Sleep generally followed these outbreaks, during which we strayed into the neglected garden and talked.

Mrs. Snozle was a trouble to Jocky, and no wonder. Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Snozle were old friends, and when Mrs. Snozle wanted a home, Mrs. Berdan asked her to come as her companion without consulting her daughter. When she did arrive, Jocky's dread became realised. Mrs. Berdan's worrying nature had the power to upset Mrs. Snozle terribly, and at her advanced age it was dangerous.

"It is no use, Penny," said Jocky, after one of such scenes. "I must get rid of Mrs. Snozle, or something serious will happen. Mother is better alone, and I really feel as if she was care enough to me without another old woman."

My sympathy was all I could offer; that I gave. Advice was unnecessary to Jocky; she possessed the finest reasoning powers and the highest judgment. Thoroughly upright in thought and deed, her mind was equal to any emergency without hesitation, and, never having any one to lean upon, she had tested

her own ability to cope with the difficulty. High as my opinion of her had been before, it became loftier still when I saw the obstacles she daily contended with, how much was exacted from her, and how totally unshared her anxieties were. Her courage and patience were heroic; her duties in the house were like everything connected with her, real, vigorous. Her small hands grasped the broom determinedly, and she brought her whole energy to bear upon the carpet; she swept it. I was sorry, and I suppose I looked it.

"Now, what's the matter with you? I hope that long face is not worn for me."

"It is. I think it hard for you to do all this."

"There are less fatiguing things, I'll allow, but not more necessary ones. Somebody must do this, you know, and Nanny gets overdone often. It encourages her to have me help."

"And who encourages you?"

"No one; but I have learnt how to carry my bundle of sticks so that they don't hurt. Once they did, and I nearly tossed them off, but I found my back was bent to their shape, so I concluded we had better stay together. And if I put them down now I do not know who would take them up."

"Nor I. What do you fancy Yorke would say if he knew the state of things?"

She started. We had never mentioned him.

"He would express himself surprised, no doubt, though I never gave him, or any one else, reason to suppose I was accustomed to luxury of any kind. Don't name him again, Penny. I would sooner forget all about it."

I felt sure of it. Her mind was not altogether peaceful; something harassed her painfully, but no murmur escaped her. All her troubles were endured alike silently.

Summer waned. Mellow tints crept

amongst the leaves, and some fluttered down stealthily, as if ashamed of their early desertion. Soft showers of rain fell and drove the bees from the heather. The wind swept over the moors at dusk, and warned one that summer was to be superseded by melancholy autumn.

The fields below, once standing with waving corn, were bare. Still I stayed. Some letters had passed between aunt and Jocky, and it was decided that I should remain and keep Jocky company.

Winter on the lonely heath had few terrors for me. I was happy; I had Jocky's friendship, and the use of her piano.

I had become accustomed to the ways of "Crag House." Jocky's spirit-crippled gloom, and her matter-of-fact manner and quick wit, found a way through most difficulties.

If the supper was poor, or the people at it cross, she said nothing to make matters worse.

But when they had gone to bed her ready wit improvised a second repast, over which we laughed and joked all shadows away.

We were always the last up in the house; it was Jocky's special duty to examine doors and windows, and to see to the safety of fires. Many a girl would have flinched from making such a tour in that solitary place, but her one idea was the honest performance of her duty, and any objection her feelings made was not attended to.

After three days of rain came one of sunshine, and Mrs. Berdan informed us she and Mrs. Snozle were going away for a few days. To this plan Jocky readily assented, and the fly having been repaired at Ripon, was ordered to come for them on the following Monday. They were going to Harrogate, and thither they went, after exhausting Jocky, Nanny, and me by repeated calls upon our strength and patience.

A feeling of much happiness fell upon us

when the carriage moved from the gate. Will set us the example of sleep, and we followed it, remaining so till Nanny came with tea.

The woman's joy at her mistress's departure was amusing, and yet sad, for it showed only too evidently the lasting dislike with which Mrs. Berdan had inspired her. She declared she only stayed for the sake of Miss Berdan, and I saw that she often restrained her temper out of respect to Jocky. I may as well mention a fact now while I remember.

Through all the years I have known Jocky I have never seen any one rude to her.

I have heard her speak sharply to people, I have heard her say what others would hesitate to utter, and yet she has provoked no insolence, no anger. Her remarks are always so true that conscience disarms wrath and prevents retaliation.

"Now, Nanny," asked Jocky, sitting up,

"what shall we do with the time? No one has a claim upon us save God."

"Do our duty to Him first, and each other after, and then enjoy ourselves, miss. I don't forget my duty, and I'd have mightily little excuse if I did, for you're always a-doing yours."

"Then we will have a holiday. You can go away, Nanny."

"I don't want to. Who'll tidy up for you two? Your fingers know more about the pinaner than anything else. But I should like to go out to tea once in a way, Miss Jocky."

"And you shall. You can go when you like; it will be something novel for us, Penny."

I assented to the arrangement and the novelty. Nanny did not require a second bidding.

One day she informed us she was going to take a dish of tea with Jane Martin, in "The Hamlet," and by two o'clock she had gone.

CHAPTER XI.

A KEEN wind was blowing over the moors, the clouds drifted quickly, and allowed the sun no chance of appearing. It was a dark day, a mourner for summer. The house had improved, like all else, since the old ladies had gone.

An air of refined comfort was perceptible, Jocky's easy, well-bred grace seemed to have crept into the shabbiest corner. A cluster of late roses and ferns were grouped in a vase that was an eye-sore empty. "Cornhill" and "Macaulay" lay cheek by jowl, some stockings neatly folded had their place in the work-basket. The woman whose hand produced such harmony stood mischievous and happy

before the kitchen fire, grasping the poker, her dark cloth dress pinned back, her sleeves rolled up, cheeks flushed, her eyes bright.

"You have seen me in several characters, you shall see me now in that of cook. I am going to make some cakes."

The dimpled hands rolled out the dough, clever speeches seasoning it, and I sat charmed by the table where she stood at work. The tin was filled and placed in the oven, the remainder was folded into small ovals to bake quickly.

Our laughter did not totally banish all sounds, and I heard the thud of horses' feet.

"There is some one here, Jocky."

"The baker, very likely; I'll tell him we do not want flour, and save him the trouble of coming to the door."

She put her head through the window, the rolling-pin in her hand.

"Don't get out, Tuson; we do not want anything."

"I am not Tuson, Miss Berdan."

I started up. Mr. Thorne and another gentleman were seated in a dog-cart before the kitchen window, both laughing.

"O, la! la!" exclaimed Jocky, under breath. Aloud—

"How do you do, Mr. Thorne? I had no idea you were acquainted with any one in these parts, or that I should ever see you again."

"May I hope the sight is not displeasing to you?"

"You may. I have Miss Gedise here; she modestly screens herself behind me, but if you will alight I have no doubt she will be happy to help me to entertain you. There are no servants here; we wait upon ourselves. Perhaps you can contrive to tie your horse up safely?"

I supposed we were to go into the parlour, but Jocky scorned such a move.

"They see we are in the kitchen, they shall

be made aware I am not ashamed of being caught in it."

I wanted to remonstrate, but had no opportunity, they were at the door.

"Allow me to receive you in the apartment I am best calculated to adorn—the kitchen. That chair, though aged, is equal to sustaining your weight, Mr. Thorne."

These men were taken aback. They had never been received in a kitchen before by a young woman with her sleeves tucked up, possessed of the manners of a duchess. I fancy they thought as I did; it was only her nonsense; that presently she would lead the way into a sitting-room. But having welcomed Mr. Thorne's friend, Sir George Winchester, graciously, she proceeded to entertain them as unconcernedly as though we had all been in a drawing-room, even twitting her guests smartly when they betrayed the least unacquaintance with the surroundings.

"Don't gape at the flags any longer, Mr.

Thorne; they won't turn into velvet-pile even to honour *you*."

He almost blushed.

"I assure you I had no fault to find with them. I was thinking that—"

"That there is an odour of burning. Precisely, and my cakes will be ruined. I had no idea your olfactory nerves were capable of smelling anything so ordinary. I should have fancied a savoury dish of French manufacture was more in your line."

She rose, opened the oven, turned the cakes. Sir George took courage to put his glass in his eye and change his position. She noticed him.

"Would you like to see *inside* the oven? It is a somewhat celebrated one, having once upon a time (unintentionally) baked a kitten. It is a pity I did not know you in those days, Mr. Thorne; your nose might have been instrumental in saving poor pussie."

The baronet gasped—

"How strange it is I have never met you

before, Miss Berdan; for I suppose you have lived here all your life?"

"Yes. But it is not at all strange, Sir George; I never go into society. I do go *out*, but that is at an unfashionable hour, either when you are asleep or sitting over your wine. If you came past here in the early morning you might see me scrubbing the doorstep or beating the mats on the wall. But if you look for me in any one's *drawing-room* you will never find me."

"Do you know where I live?"

"No, but I can guess it is in some big house, with a massive door and a pompous footman behind it."

"Then I hope you will one day be wiser. I shall tell Lady Winchester to call."

"Please don't send your wife here; we are not in any one's district. I am a Mormon, and my mother does not read tracts."

"Miss Berdan, you are too severe. It is not my wife I allude to, it is my mother."

"That is worse. Old ladies sometimes get prophetic. She might tell you I wanted to marry you."

"How could that be proved?"

"By your asking me."

"Shall I do it?"

"Certainly not till you have tested my capabilities for housekeeping. You shall stay to tea and eat my cakes. We are in a hurry; therefore, all must be pressed into the service. Sir George, prop up the other half of that table. Mr. Thorne, put the kettle on. Penny, anything, everything."

Laughter almost suffocated me. The men obeyed, each executing the order given him in a state of amused obedience. The baronet went on his hands and knees to find the table leg, and there remained with his head on one side.

"Well, what are you doing?" asked Jocky.

"Nothing. I am only considering whether I should bring the whole thing down on me if I pulled its leg."

"No, it is safe, and if it wasn't it would not be a very hard matter to mop up all the brains that would escape from *your* head. Aristocracy does not need brains, you know. All it requires to ensure a safe and prosperous conduct to life's end is a complexion and a moustache."

The table was spread. Fresh eggs and hot buttered cakes graced the board, and Jocky invited us to be seated and partake of the fare most winningly.

Anything so novel had never occurred to the gentlemen before, and they appeared charmed with the coolness and independent manner of the eccentric lady who presided at the half-past five banquet. They praised the cakes, and ate sufficient to make one believe they liked them.

"When may we come again, Miss Berdan?"

"On washing day—Thursday. I shall be able to make you useful. I particularly request that you describe your visit to Crag House minutely when next you see Aunt

Sutherland. Give the account when she has a state party, stiffened by stupidity and conceit, and mind you get every one's ear. If any one asks who I am, you will hear her say in accents of pity, 'A poor Yorkshire girl,' or, 'The unfortunate result of a misalliance made by my sister.'"

They made no sign of going, and Jocky presently dismissed them as if they had been schoolboys. She conducted them to the door, patted the horse, and bade them farewell with such a mixture of graciousness and condescension that they departed in a tumult of surprise and pleasure. My cheeks were flaming when she confronted me.

"Have you caught a fever, Penny?"

"No, but what will those men think?"

Her reply was to vault on to the dresser, and laugh till the tears ran down her face.

"It will be some time before they think at all, and many a day ere they cease to do it. I have played a part and won my laurels. I

have engraved my name on their memory. Had I taken them into the parlour and offered them seed-loaf and muddy port, or sherry at half-a-crown a bottle, they would have gone away with heartburn and the impression that we were after the fashion of all poverty-stricken middle-class people; and the baronet might have imagined I wanted to tack myself on to the extremity of his name, and thereby rise slightly above my neighbours. A few days and he would have forgotten me; now he never will. I astonished him so much that I gained his attention, roused his curiosity, and made him doubtful who was conferring the honour, he or I. A parlour entertainment would soon have escaped his recollection, but *tea* in the *kitchen* he will remember all his life. Depend upon it, Penny, success in this Athenian age means 'novelty' either in public or private life. If I wanted to embrace the stage I should not commence at some minor theatre and creep up like a persevering

caterpillar. I should garner all my energies, pile them together to make one grand effort —as something 'new' blaze forth upon the world. I should by that means make a "name;" after that would come the money. Talent there must be, but unless you make a noise no one will ever stop to look at it. Did I but fancy my *début* before the public would be as complete as this in my mother's kitchen before a titled man and his friend, I would not tarry long ere I made it. That I pine to throw off these shackles I won't deny; that my ideas fly away from this Moorland home and its occupants daily, it is sinful to disown. And I cannot believe this power, this desire to be up and doing, will always be passive, or be satisfied with brushing carpets. I have hushed its cry many a night, I have striven to silence it by considering the condition of my mother, and if yonder heath could but speak it would own to having witnessed the birth and death of many a promising child of imagination."

My heart leaped. I knew what puzzled people now; I had found the key to her peculiarity.

"Jocky, you are highly talented; you are doing wrong to strangle the genius. God surely intends you to make good use of it."

"I think I am, and I know it causes people to misjudge me. Penny, I ought to have two faces, for I certainly have two characters. If I am moderately clever I have not the heart to reprove the feeble talent, though it involves me in difficulties; it deserves to live and grow if it can, for it has struggled since its birth beneath the clods of oppression. Say no more now; some day, perhaps, the way will be clear."

I obeyed; my heart was touched by her noble submission.

A day or two following the "reception" a letter came for Jocky. I recognised the writing as Mr. Thorne's.

I named it to her.

"Yes, it is from him; a similar letter to

what all men write when they are, or fancy they are, in love. My answer must be contrary to the generality, however, and I hope he will not bestow his penmanship upon me again. It does not meet with the approbation it very likely deserves."

She was too great a lady to comment on his weakness, possessed of too much delicacy to show his letter. I saw her put it in the fire, and there it ended. Mrs. Berdan had left strict orders that cleaning was to be done during their absence, and honourable Jocky had every corner turned out as scrupulously as if her mother had been standing by. With a towel tied over her head she mounted the steps and dusted and brushed almost impossible places.

In the midst of this duty, kindness to the servant was not overlooked, and Nanny went to the hamlet tea parties whenever she asked.

One evening I heard a knock at the door, and answered it. There stood the identical

beggar who had appeared at aunt's the day of the ball. My astonishment was extreme, and I saw the man recognised me. He stared a second, then enquired—

"Who lives here?"

"Mrs. Berdan."

"Can I see her?"

"No, she is from home."

"Are you keeping house?"

"Yes."

Something in his questions and evil countenance upset my courage; I lost my self-possession, and slammed the door in his face.

The sound brought Jocky from the pantry, where she was getting supper.

"What is the matter, Penny?"

I related what had happened, and her face assumed the death-like pallor that had previously so alarmed me.

"Quick, Penny, fasten every door and window. Will! Will! Watch, old friend, watch!"

Her orders were prompt, and it was not the first time the dog had been so bidden. He trotted off with ears erect, scenting through the house. But no angry growl arose; the man, whoever he was, had gone. When my causeless fright—of which I was now ashamed—had passed, I asked her what *she* feared."

"I hardly know, Penny. I have scented a danger for years hidden in one quarter, and when any movement from it is made I at once take alarm. Do not question me; some things are better not spoken of. One may invoke them by thought, though God forbid there should be any sympathy between me and that blackguard."

I was relieved when Nanny returned. The solitariness of our situation helped to conjure up robber scenes in the approaching night, and I was pleased to hear Jocky tell Nanny there had been a doubtful-looking tramp at the door, and caution her to be wary.

Nothing occurred, however, and I had for-

gotten the circumstance, when Mrs. Snozle wrote, announcing their return on the following day. They arrived, each with a string of narrow escapes to relate, and Mrs. Berdan with inflammation in one eye owing to the sun having come through the carriage window. Loud complaints were made as to the manner of cleaning, and hearty dissatisfaction with everything evinced.

We were all getting enveloped once more in the "wet blanket," and a chill crept over me. A life of vexation was recommenced, troubles that no one seemed to know the origin of, found their way into our midst, and took up so prominent a place, that pleasures and pleasant intercourse were excluded.

Poor Mrs. Berdan's irritability blinded her to all sense of justice, and I was shocked one day to hear her reproving Jocky in an unwarrantable manner.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Joan. You are unnatural. Some day you

will repent of your conduct, you will be sorry for it. You have not done your duty to your mother."

"God knows I shall," replied Jocky's low voice; "I foresee that I shall have every cause to repent of cloaking villany. You are right, I have not done my duty to my mother. I have allowed my feelings to master me and turn my steps down the road she desired, instead of following the one honesty indicated. Mother, you are to blame; you know you are. You are unjust to me; you punish me for the sins of others. Things have no right to be in such a state. This house ought not to be stinted. How can you expect me to see and know all this, and hold my tongue? You know my disposition is severe, my judgment hard, that my speech is sharp and apt to wound, then why provoke me? You know that for you I will do anything, if you will cling to me, me *alone*, and you will not. How am I to believe you love me when you pay no

attention to my wishes? No matter how calm the waters of our life may appear to outsiders, I know where the rock is sunk upon which we always split. And in common justice to me you should own it, and not give the impression that the fault is mine. You have discovered I won't tell, and you take advantage of my consideration—for those who do not deserve it—to give a false colouring to things. I may one day regret my conduct, as you say, and I likewise think you will, before long, repent of your wilful mistake."

I turned away; I had heard enough to rouse my suspicions that there was a bitter source of discomfort in Crag House; that mother and daughter disagreed over something; that one feared and the other hated.

What was it?

CHAPTER XII.

THESE scenes, similar to what I have recorded, were of frequent occurrence, usually in Mrs. Berdan's bed-room when Jocky was seeing her mother to bed. The arguments were long, and patiently maintained on the part of Jocky, who, however beset, never did more than hold fast to her theory, whatever it was.

Had I been asked, I could have told Mrs. Berdan she might as reasonably have expected to alter one of the blocks of granite that had its basis in the bowels of the earth, and its position on the Moors, as the opinion of her daughter. Hard Jocky possibly was, but the

conduct of every one depends more or less upon the provocation and treatment received.

One day Mrs. Berdan made a rush into the room with the request for three pounds to pay the tax-man.

"I have not got it."

"You have; you received some money last week."

"I did, and a portion of it went to pay bills."

"And you have some? Wicked girl! you said you had none."

"Neither have I—*to lend.* What have you done with yours?"

"How dare you question your mother? I have done what was proper with it."

"I have no doubt of it. So have I with mine."

"Then you will not lend me three pounds?"

"No."

I was sorry for the old lady, who seemed distressed.

"Jocky, if you have the money you should give it to your mother."

"If she wanted it I would. I have lived this deceitful life too long not to know a false alarm from a real one by now. When the butcher's account was too much for her I did not refuse to work for their bazaar to smooth matters over and gain time. But take my word for it, Penny, there is a tax at Crag House levied only by the devil, and come what may, I will never pay a fraction of it."

At tea, Mrs. Berdan looked as if she had been crying, and preserved a dignified silence.

This was depressing to me, but on Jocky it took little effect. Nothing disturbed her visibly, but her sleep was light and short—the least sound in the house, the squeak of a mouse, the tapping of a leaf on the glass, roused her to an immediate state of thought and action.

Once or twice she slid out of bed noiselessly, listened a second, then opened a drawer, and

taking something out of it, left the room. Will slept at our door, but his ears were not quicker than his mistress's. His training was peculiar —he never barked at these alarms. A rap with his tail was the signal always promptly answered by Jocky. She warned me of these disturbances, and begged I would lie quiet till they returned, but that it was impossible for her to do so if she fancied she heard anything. She supposed her nerves were wrong, and laughed. I did not think much ailed them.

The training of Will had not been the action of a nervous woman. She had had the dog from a puppy, and taught him silence on duty. How she had accomplished what many men fail at, I do not know. The scarcity and value of a poacher's dog is owing to the difficulty there is in making him keep silent. The more I thought of it the more I became convinced it was the precaution of a clever woman, aware of a danger, but too brave to flee from it.

I asked what she kept in the drawer.

She showed me. A small life-preserver, heavily weighted and slender in the shaft.

"What made you educate Will so highly?"

"Because I wanted a guard, and a discreet one; I have it, and I would not change my dog for a detachment of the militia. And what is more, I would not sleep a night in this house without Will. It is lonely here, Penny, and, as I told you before, I suppose I am nervous."

About dusk a change took place, the wind turned and blew sorrowfully over the hills, leaving an echo upon the Moors that never died away. It rushed to and fro in gusts, startling by its intensity one moment, depressing by its melancholy the next. We delayed going to bed till the half hour before midnight. Then we, or at least I, crept up regretfully. Mrs. Berdan and Mrs. Snozle had been asleep two hours. The doors were fastened, and Jocky's last act was to look

into her mother's room. The first night I noticed her do this, I remarked—

"Does not your mother lock her door?"

"No; I have had the key in my possession years."

I slept soundly, and it was not till Jocky had shaken me twice that I roused.

"What is the matter?" gasped I, half asleep still.

"I do not know, and am going to see. We have heard something more than wind. You stop here; I shall not be long."

She went. I waited. She did not return. Supposing she had— My head whirled like a whirlpool, and I rushed downstairs.

The kitchen door was open. I entered. A lamp stood on the table, set there by Jocky. I could hear a suppressed storm in the scullery, but the door was fast.

My heart stopped for a second; then I heard—

Call your cursed hound off!"

"Not till you swear you will go out by the way you came in, through the window. Recollect, you are powerless; I could let daylight into your skull as you lie there. Shall I do it?"

"No; let me go to the devil my own pace."

"Go, and welcome for me. I will neither hasten nor retard your progress."

"Call your dog off, I say. The piece is nearly out of my back. I cannot stand much more."

"I will, and you must go quickly, for I shall not be able to hold him many seconds, and if he gets at you again he will worry you."

There was a scuffle, a gurgling choking sound, muttered curses, a smash of glass, and the door was free.

I pushed it, and looked in. In the centre of the space stood Jocky, holding the enraged animal by the throat, her night-dress stream-

ing with blood that poured from the brute's mouth, her hands steeped in it.

"My God! he is furious: I cannot master him. Penny, quick—turn the tap on, and drench a towel."

I did so.

"Put it over his head; there."

Disengaging one hand, she drenched him thoroughly.

He crouched, his eyes were red, but the fury had gone in some measure out of them. We locked the door, and stood in the kitchen. Will lay down panting.

"There, for once the danger is averted. You came opportunely, Penny, with that towel. Will belongs to the bloodhound race, and if he tastes blood too long, he becomes savage, and desires to eat. The only remedy is water; pour that on them freely, and you diminish the paroxysm of frenzy. He did not know me when you entered; he was mad, so I can excuse him. It is the ferocity of the

tribe, the characteristic savageness that will never be eradicated. There is always danger where there is beauty, and none can deny that that brute has all the acknowledged beauty of the race."

I looked. He was handsome, crouching like a tiger by the door, watchful and eager for his prey, with strong limbs, in which the sinews stood up like cords. His eyes were deep, and though still passionate, there burnt a gentle light beneath the fury. He had the expression of a puppy when tranquil, no doubt the result of his kind and skilful bringing up. His good-nature had been fostered, otherwise, I believe, he was a most savage beast, and in all probability, in other hands he would have proved like many bloodhounds, untameable and dangerous.

Jocky had got him when a pup from an officer's servant in York, and his parents were noted animals.

I admired and I feared him. I have made

no mention of my terror upon this occasion, but I can hardly think you will suppose I was as calm then as now.

I stood quivering with fright, speechless. Half faint with the sight of blood, I was unable to question the extraordinary girl as to the circumstance of her meeting with the robber. Her nerve was unnatural; she was as composed as if nothing had happened. The occurrence seemed to have even no novelty for her.

This could not be the first encounter. She bade the hound watch, and motioned me upstairs, leaving the kitchen door open.

"Now, if that villain should return, Will can entertain him. Don't tremble so, Penny, it is all over now. It will be some time before his back heals, and, if I am any judge, many a day ere he enters Crag House again. What a funk he was in, to be sure. You see there is need for some watch to be kept in this abode."

"Indeed there is, Jocky; why do you stay? Get your mother to go into the hamlet."

"Not for worlds; while she lives, one place is as safe as another. Tell her nothing about this night's work, Penny. It is wiser not to spread such stories. Nanny would, perhaps, desert us, and I could not easily replace her."

"How will you manage about the broken window?"

"Say the cat jumped through."

To speak of awaking in the morning would be ridiculous. I never slept.

At dinner time Mrs. Berdan called attention to Jocky's white face, and informed us that "Joan inherited her father's unhealthy complexion."

If she had an indifferent complexion she had a splendid courage. Would it always remain so strong; would it not some day labour in vain to obey the commands of that inexorable will.

I spoke.

"Jocky, you are killing yourself. Such terror is too severe a strain upon your heart; you suffer with it afterwards. Why not go away?"

"To spend each day and night in an agony of voiceless alarm? You cannot know what that creeping terror is or you would not recommend any one to expose themselves to it. No; my heart must ache on, or I must be killed. Perhaps God will release me from my duty; who knows?"

"Ay, who knows? A glimpse of the future is unattainable. I could not see the past, I cannot see the future, and the present is only lent; we may not feel sure of it. What must life be to those who have a circle of dear ones round them? Continual parting or the dread of it. My loneliness has but one comfort in it, that little more can be taken from me; I have given nearly all I have to give. I am not resenting the will of God,

but the stripes given by that hand are still sore."

The leaves were nearly all gone when Mrs. Berdan met with an accident. She fell down, and the result was serious.

Now came the final struggle, the trial of power in adversity, and courage to surmount sorrow.

Jocky stood firm to her duty, supported by an invisible arm. She nursed by night and day, her mother preferring her attendance to any other.

Mrs. Snozle had gone; Jocky could not do with the chattering old lady. I little thought how tender she was till I witnessed her many acts of kindness and patience to her irritable parent, whose ailment prevented her having the least consideration for any one but herself.

She also managed the house, for my services were not approved by Mrs. Berdan. Yet no sound of complaint or weariness was

heard. Only a terrible hardness stole over her face, and her appetite grew daily less.

Mrs. Berdan did not improve, and Jocky told Dr. Brierly she did not believe she would recover.

The man started, made grimaces, according to his custom, rubbed up his hair, which grew high enough already.

"What makes you think so?"

"I cannot tell you; but I seem to *know* it."

Afterwards she said to me—

"Very likely you laugh at such things as presentiments, Penny; all wise people do. The only difference is that I am *unwise*, and do not laugh at them. I had one the other night on the stairs. I chilled suddenly, I recoiled from the presence of Death. Why should I if it were not coming?"

The shadow of death is so awful that I cannot stay under it myself, so I will not ask you to, reader. Let me hasten over this portion of my story.

Mrs. Berdan died, after much suffering I know, and I believe in the Lord. I will not speak of the dead. Let qualities and faults alike be forgotten. The mention of either only awakens memories that were better sleeping.

Those who have watched the approach of death will recollect how in agony they traced the passage of the beloved one through the valley, and how horribly long the journey seemed. Years after, a shaded lamp, a flickering fire, the smell of some particular drug will recall the unutterable anguish experienced as we watched the struggling creature for whom we silently besought release. How, benumbed and sick, we marked the grey dawn intrude itself into the chamber of mourning. How the early birds mocked us with their joyful twitters. Many sad, watchful nights were passed in Crag House, and our eyes grew weary—our hearts feeble. Great gusts of terror shook us. Death was

regarding us all, though only calling one. I found relief in copious tears; Jocky moved about in stony grief, her face twisted in blanched misery. She selected the necessary linen and cap; she wrote orders without shedding a tear. Nanny entreated her, between her own wailings, to "cry." Mrs. Thomas advised her to turn for consolation to the Bible, and find a chapter beginning with "no condemnation," and ending with "no separation." She little guessed that the prayer Mr. Thomas had written for her comfort was crumpled in her pocket. Jocky did not care to tell them that long watching and unshed tears had temporarily blinded her. They might not have understood, and an explanation was impossible. Throughout the day she had been constantly moving, performing her duties with the exactitude that characterised her.

The casement that had for so many years admitted harvest sunrise and frosty moon-

light, that showed the purple hills and clustering houses in the hamlet below, must be darkened, for this sleep is too hallowed to be looked in upon by nature.

There were the things to put away that would never be wanted again, yet the corpse on the bed did not seem to her entirely unconscious; it is only when we forget, that our dead become dead to us. In our grief we cherish the thought that they know we miss them, and we are more eager than ever to pick every speck off the carpet, as "mother" would have done. We fancy they know our regret, our sorrow for past neglect and sharp words. And this is soothing, for it is never our kindness we remember, but our unkindness. But enough—those who know need not be told, those who have not suffered cannot understand.

It was a bright morning on which she died, a difficult day to associate with death. The agony past, then came doubt.

We were alone in the room. Mrs. Thomas had gone.

Jocky was suffering, had suffered what would have turned the brain of an ordinary woman. It was a peculiarly trying case.

"Penny, why do people misrepresent death? What do they mean by the 'sweet sleep'? Do you see it? Can you distinguish anything beautiful there? I cannot. I see what is voiceless, sightless, senseless, and consequently—hideous. Inanimation to me is horrible—where do others find the beauty, I wonder. It is, I suspect, that their brains fly over the valley, and alight on the hills tipped with the Sun of Promise. Mine cannot. It remains faithful to actual reality. It will take me time to make the journey. I know that she has gone, that her voice will reach me no more, and I must grope about till I become used to the silence; nothing will break till I get reconciled."

I drew her away. I made no attempt to

sermonise, like Mrs. Thomas. I had profited by witnessing her failure. Her discourse had bounced off Jocky's brain like hailstones off a roof.

She needed what she said—time. A great understanding cannot be turned by every gust, like a weather-cock.

Reader, there was something more touching than I care to describe in the silent fight between Jocky's will and the inevitable.

It was awful to see the great nature struggling alone, hiding every tear of emotion as if it had been a sin; compelling the weary brain to act, extorting the same service from weakened heart and faded eye. It was fearful to behold, and to be unable to prevent. But I could not reach her in her sorrow; only a similar mind dare venture into the recess of secrecy, and meet hers. It must be some one superior; one of the rare natures that God sends into the world that could sympathise intelligibly with her.

In that secluded place there were no peculiar people, and Jocky had to wrestle alone. Looking more delicate than ever in her mourning, she worked diligently to prepare the house for the sale of furniture.

Crag House was settled upon Jocky, but she had no means to keep it up, and to replace the furniture was impossible. The sale was compulsory.

Mrs. Berdan's debts were considerable, and that the only way of meeting them. What the orphan would do with her empty, lonely house, I did not know.

"You won't sell it, Jocky?"

"No; all abject things have some sort of a shelter, why should not I? Maybe I shall be thankful to hide myself here one day."

"Can you not borrow sufficient money to pay the debts, and keep the old place as it is?"

"I think not. My one solitary relation, my uncle, does not trouble his head about me.

He does not ask me where I am going, or what I intend doing. He only hopes I will keep myself respectable. Flinty old sinner! May God forgive him his unkindness to me, for I never can."

I knew something unpleasant had occurred, also that this generous old man was Jocky's only uncle, Andrew Berdan by name, a civil engineer.

She had seen him several times since her mother's death, and many letters had passed. But I had no idea this country possessed such a Christian till Jocky enlightened me.

At the close of her recital some strong feeling shook me, and I longed for a man's strength that I might have made such a noble creature the return he merited. There was something so gentle, so merciful, in his treatment to the orphan that my admiration for him became boundless. His letters were such specimens of affection. Harder-hearted than one could credit, his epistles were like his speeches, full of cynical insults. Totally un-

able, spite of his experience and superior ability, to understand his niece, he unjustly declined to admire what he was unfamiliar with, and condemned her independence as unladylike.

Failing to ruffle one who had the purest instincts of refinement by his paltry insinuations, he struck still deeper, and when he expressed the hope that she would keep herself "respectable," he conveyed the impression beyond that doubt he had no opinion of her morals.

Jocky said little, though I knew she would rather he had hit her, and had he been able to read the expression in the white face, he would have been astonished to find where he ranked in her estimation.

"If his head is never bowed by any disgrace save mine, it will always stand erect. But whatever befalls me, however great my need, I will never ask either food or shelter at his hands."

So a barrier sprang up between them; they toiled apart. The girl, spurred on by ambi-

tion and independence, full of hope and generosity; the man snarling and snapping at every one, loveless and unloved. It is possible their end may not be unlike that of the "Rich Man and Lazarus," the one will find rest in God's bosom, the other will be buried.

Crag House was set in order. Bills posted everywhere announced the sale for the 26th. Jocky had few friends in the hamlet. Dr. Brierly did not live near, and he bade her farewell with genuine regret.

The simple faith and courage of the girl had roused the admiration of the man who saw so many scenes of pain and misery. Her fortitude in affliction had contrasted oddly with the confusion that generally prevails in such cases. He made no secret of his opinion to me.

"Take care of her, Miss Gedise; she is one in a thousand. Born to command and peculiar, few will appreciate or understand her. Stronger than a man, gentler than a child, she stands alone. If justice is to be done her,

an interpreter should stand between her and the world."

His words have occurred to me since as remarkable for their accuracy. Her head never failed her, her thought was extraordinary. She arranged without any assistance cleverly. With a few pounds she bought what was required to make two beds and the kitchen habitable.

The things were poor, of course, but selected with taste and judgment.

Nanny and Will were to live in the house. Nanny had saved money, and with the little Jocky paid her she declared herself content.

The scheme suited Jocky, for it enabled her to have a home to return to at any time.

We were going back to Surrey. I knew who had made aunt invite us—Yorke,—and I persuaded Jocky to go, hoping it might end in her marrying him.

What Jocky intended doing I did not know, but I felt sure her plans would take a reasonable and practical form.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a raw November day when we bade adieu to "Crag House." I did so gladly. I had seen more misery there than I ever hope to do again, and my mind is not vigorous enough to cast all shadows behind it. I have my dark moments; skeletons of the past confront me in all the horror of dreaded recollection.

I think Jocky's sad, pale face startled the inmates of Ringly Royal. They saw she had suffered.

Aunt asked me about the Yorkshire home, and I turned the best side of the picture to her.

It takes one who has known sorrow to feel for others. It is useless expecting sympathy from those who have never required it.

Jocky's trouble gave Yorke the excuse for attention, and she was either too listless or preoccupied to object.

I felt sure he would gladly forget the past, and seek now, while her loneliness made her more tractable, to retrieve his position. He did, and she accepted him. How he had pacified his mother I did not know, but her desire now was for them to be engaged. Perhaps she had found that the Yorkshire girl had more influence over her beloved son than she had.

They had some difficulty in persuading Jocky to a second engagement. Her pride was stung, her memory true.

"It is not long since you hastened my departure, and told me you had other views for your son. How is it they are altered? I am the same poor girl, poorer now than then, with

precisely the same stony heart and abrupt manner. My forlorn condition has not taken the devil out of me. It is only resting the better to do battle by and by. Do not deceive yourselves."

Yorke pleaded, aunt reasoned and soothed, Jocky laughed.

"There, I am tired and amused at any one enticing a mannerless pauper like I am into their bosom. It will be your own fault, Yorke, if you regret it. I advise you to leave me alone. When I am gone you will forget me. The customary way to treat a beggar is to toss her a copper, not offer her marriage."

"Beggar! You are no beggar, and where are you gong to? Mother, how can you allow your own niece to go amongst strangers? If she is driven off, I—"

"Don't, my dear son, don't break your mother's heart. She shall not go; she shall marry you."

"Shall she! I never allow any one to say

shall to me, Aunt Sutherland; it is a peculiarity of mine. Supposing we dissolve this parliament."

She opened the window, and thrust her head out. Her eyes were flashing. That "shall" had roused the temper crouching beneath the external calm.

I have told you she accepted him; it is unnecessary to relate what occurred before she did that.

To my astonishment they came to terms, and Yorke's joy seemed to blind him to her indifference.

She did not promise anything, and when I questioned her she said—

"When the novelty wears off he may change his mind, and the engagement will not hurt me."

"You speak as if you did not intend to marry him."

"At present I do not."

"Then you have no right to be engaged."

"And whose fault is that, pray? Have they not worried me into it? I want a shelter just now; if I turn rusty they may put me out. If you are fearful for Yorke's affections, be at rest. They will easily be conferred upon some one else when the time comes."

"No, Jocky, you are mistaken. He loves you as he will never love any one else. If you cannot return his affection you had better go."

"Do I look as if I could not?"

The mask was laid aside, and I beheld "Love" in the animated face as plainly as though it had been written on it.

Hers was that proud, cold nature not readily moved, that love could not disturb from its settled composure. But, like all such women, she was capable of intense love, infinite self-reproach.

"Why do you feign indifference?"

"I don't. He knows I like him, only when I warm at all he gets so horridly spoony."

Half glad, half frightened, I let the subject

drop. My time was taken up continually with Eunice.

Charlotte and Isabel were still statuesque and stupid, and still disengaged. William was at the bank; Albert busy farming. Mrs. Albert had been in sorrow lately; her mother had died, and now the little lady swept her dress, craped to the waist, through the November mire.

Her child found his way to the housekeeper's room frequently, and a resting-place in Jocky's arms. The "little lad" was a source of ill-concealed joy to her. Her lips trembled when she took him, and her eyes grew beautifully tender. She hushed him when ill more lovingly than his mother could, walking with him in her arms for hours.

Jocky had never been accustomed to children, but love of them supplied all deficiency in the way of experience. She was loving and fondling the little fellow one day when Yorke came in.

"Still hugging that brat! I wish I were a child."

"I had rather have you as you are."

He attempted to put his arm round her; she resisted.

"I must say your conduct confirms your speech. You kiss the child rapturously, and you won't let me touch you when you can help it."

He left the room.

I looked at her. She was laughing softly to herself.

"Don't scold, Penny. It is his fault! his indecision provokes me to rebel. I cannot help tantalising him. Why does he not kiss me if he wants to, and have done with it? If he would be more authoritative, possibly I should be obedient. But I cannot resist the temptation to say 'No,' when he asks me if 'I will.' He cannot believe I love him without tangible proof. He would like me to sit with my hand in his, or plan ridiculous encounters

in the corridors on purpose to afford the opportunity to embrace. I do wish he would be more manly, treat me more like a woman, and less like a divinity. You had better give him a hint that this spooning is becoming very irksome to me. I cannot dream by day as well as night, and to think of him does not satisfy every craving of my heart. I wish he would lose his money, or get sick, I should know what to do then. I could work for him. This idle life is putting me out of concert with every one and everything. Active employment is necessary to my existence. I have had work and responsibility all my life. I get none now. There is no bread to make, there are no carpets to sweep, and I am actually pining."

"Jocky, you are too practical."

"I know I am, for a lady. But I am not a lady, as my uncle told me, I am only a young person. The treatment I received never misled me on that score. Anything was good

enough for Jocky, and I have come to believe, as fervently as I do in my Maker, that this brain, these hands were never fashioned to decay, and leave no evidence behind them. They shall make something that will live when I am dead, and perhaps people will ununderstand it though they cannot its creator."

"Thorne again!"

I caught the exclamation on the stairs, and the sound of the remembered voice in the hall.

I checked my surprise. Why should I feel any, least of all express it?

"Penny, if mamma does not ask him his intentions, I shall. It is high time he proposed for either Isabel or Charlotte. He might have both, only they would fight, so he would be sure to send one back."

"Eunice, for shame!" retorted I, reprovingly.

"What for? Mamma wants him to take

one, she does not care which. Ask Yorke, if you don't believe me."

I almost blushed for the woman who had not preserved more delicacy over her manœuvres for her marriageable daughters.

The unexpected arrival of Mr. Thorne resulted in aunt asking him to stay.

I felt sure he had come with that intention, and the following day his servant arrived with his luggage.

Charlotte and Isabel were charmed. He accompanied them to parties, and relieved Yorke, who preferred spending the evenings with us.

Mrs. Sutherland made no difference on account of her sister's death. She pleaded estrangement and distance, and assured Jocky it would be such a disadvantage to the dear girls to cease visiting. They had made so many favourable impressions.

"You see, my dear Joan, gentlemen who go into society meet so many young ladies

they are apt to forget if they are not constantly reminded. I would not allow Charlotte and Isabel to miss the county ball on any consideration."

Whenever it could be contrived Jocky absented herself from the drawing-room. I knew she fretted silently for her mother, but hers was that unobtrusive grief that meets with little credence from the world. I fancied her thinner; I noticed her restlessness. Sometimes she did join the merry circle, and her engagement was rapidly becoming known.

Why was she not happy? Yorke's love was openly evinced, his constant thought was her.

He spoke to me about her. I replied that I believed her out of health, that her mother's death had been a severe shock to her system. So far my statement was correct, but I could not persuade myself this was *all*. There was something I did not know of.

For some unaccountable reason, Mr. Thorne

made no mention of his visit to "Crag House," and Jocky related it one evening. When I saw the sensation it caused I bitterly repented her frankness.

Mr. Thorne had gone to a card party at Albert's with William, who was over. Yorke had refused, and now made one of the fireside party.

Aunt dropped her fancy-work.

"Are you serious, Joan; did Mr. Thorne visit your home?"

"Yes; why should I joke about such an ordinary circumstance?"

"Ordinary! I consider it anything but an ordinary circumstance, my dear. Gentlemen don't usually take long journeys without some special motive."

Light suddenly dawned upon Yorke. He bent forward excitedly, and whispered—

"He proposed to you, Jocky?"

She made no reply.

"Don't tell a lie."

"How dare you! I'd scorn a lie. If you must have an answer, take it—he did."

Yorke, unable to hide his agitation, left the room.

"Are you going to Albert's, Yorke?"

"No, mother."

The cold was intense; as the evening wore on it increased, and at nine o'clock Eunice made the discovery that it was snowing. Aunt ordered her to bed, and fresh logs for the fire.

Her temper was slightly ruffled by the knowledge of Mr. Thorne's visit to Yorkshire.

She was not a stupid woman, and very likely this gave her the key to Mr. Thorne's procrastination. As yet he had formally proposed for neither of her daughters. Such delay was unaccountable, unless he preferred some one else. Could that some one be Joan?

Scarcely clever enough to hide all evidence

of her thonghts, she raised her eyes to the object of her reflections. They met mine.

Jocky was knitting, a queer smile twitching her lips, but any skilled observer could discern that love had nothing to do with her happiness.

There was nothing lachrymose about Jocky. Every idea was fresh and brisk, her tenderest moments were half-comical, her most affectionate speech might terminate in a witticism. This rapidity of thought was her safeguard. Had she possessed tendency to dwell on one subject long together, she would have become sickly, nerveless, hypochondriacal, for her life had not been sheltered by love and care from sorrow and disappointments.

I had not noticed her so brilliant in expression since our return to Surrey.

Surely Yorke's jealousy was not provoking some elfish design.

We retired to rest, Jocky's eyes still full of bewildering lights, her ideas evidently not given to any one present.

Before getting into bed, I drew up the blind and looked out. A clear, frosty night; the snow had ceased falling, having put a tolerably thick covering on the ground.

END OF VOL. I.